



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES
Aging and Long-Term Support Administration
PO Box 45600, Olympia, Washington 98504-5600

March 11, 2020

ALTA: NH #2020-008
INVESTIGATION PROCESS IN COVID-19 SITUATIONS AND
SUSPENSION OF CERTAIN SURVEY ACTIVITIES

Dear Nursing Facility/Home Administrator:

This letter supersedes Administrator letter ALTA NH #2020-007. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has revised and re-issued [QSO-20-14-NH](#) with substantial new information. Additionally, Governor Inslee issued a proclamation around managing visitors in nursing homes and assisted living facilities, and information about the proclamation is included with this letter.

QSO-20-14-NH Guidance for Infection Control and Prevention of COVID-19 in Nursing Homes.

[QSO-20-14-NH](#), provides information to nursing facilities about infection prevention and control related to COVID-19. Specifically, there is guidance on:

- Screening and monitoring visitors
- Limiting or restricting visitors based on specific criteria in the memo.
- Screening and monitoring the health of staff and volunteers.
- Transferring and accepting residents with suspected or confirmed COVID-19.

QSO-20-14-NH also provides a list of reliable resources for information on COVID_19. Facilities are advised to review the references from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and CMS regularly, as the outbreak is an evolving event, and both organizations will update their sites as new information is available.

QSO-20-12-ALL Suspension of Survey Activities.

In a separate memorandum, [QSO-20-12-All](#), CMS has also revised survey, revisit, and complaint activities to enhance resident and staff protection. Effective immediately, State Survey Team actions are limited to the following (in priority order):

- Surveyors will investigate all immediate jeopardy complaints (cases that represents a situation in which entity noncompliance has placed the health and safety of recipients in its care at risk for serious injury, serious harm, serious impairment or death or harm) and allegations of abuse and neglect.
- Surveyors will investigate complaints alleging infection control concerns, including facilities with potential COVID-19 or other respiratory illnesses.
- Statutorily required recertification surveys are ongoing for NH facilities.
- Surveyors will continue re-visits necessary to resolve current enforcement actions and will initiate any initial certifications.
- Surveyors may survey facilities that have a history of infection control deficiencies at the immediate jeopardy level in the last three years.
- Surveyors may surveys of facilities that have a history of infection control deficiencies at lower levels than immediate jeopardy.
- Some survey tasks may be limited or conducted over the telephone. Review QSO-20-12-NH for details.

Governor's Proclamation 20-06.

On February 29, 2020, Governor Inslee issued [Proclamation 20-05](#), declaring a state of emergency for Washington State due to the COVID-19 outbreak. On March 10, 2020, the governor issued [Proclamation 20-06](#), which amends 20-05. Proclamation 20-06 contains the following significant prohibitions for nursing homes and assisted living facilities to protect residents against COVID-19:

- No more than one visitor is allowed per day per resident. Visitors must be adults and visits must take place in the resident's room. **This does not apply to end of life situations, nor does it apply to health care professionals such as doctors, behavioral health providers, home health nurses, and other health care professionals who provide needed care and services to residents.**
- Visitors must be screened according to criteria listed in the proclamation.
- Visitors must sign in on a reporting log.
- Facilities are prohibited from destroying the visitor log for 30 days.
- Employees and volunteers must be screened at the start of their shift, and are not permitted to work or volunteer if they show symptoms associated with COVID-19.
- Residents under a recommendation or order from the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) or the local health jurisdiction for isolation or quarantine for COVID-19 must be isolated in their rooms. A resident can choose to leave at any time.
- Nursing facility staff and volunteers are prohibited from disclosing protected and confidential information except as provided by law or with the consent of the resident.

The proclamation waives and suspends the following sections of Chapter 70.129 RCW: 090(1)(f), 090(2), 140(2)(b), 140(3), 140(4), and 140(5). It also waives and suspends WAC 388-97-0520(1)(g) and WAC 388-97-0520(1)(h).

This proclamation is effective immediately and will remain in place until midnight on April 9, 2020.

Please Note: There are some differences between the direction provided by CMS in QSO-20-14-NH and the prohibitions, and waived and suspended laws in the Governor's proclamation. Facilities must follow the "higher" or more restrictive standard of the two documents.

Residential Care Services (RCS) is committed to the health and safety of all residents and staff. If a surveyor exhibits signs of illness, they will not be deployed to a facility. RCS will assess facility visits on a case-by-case basis following the DOH quarantine guidelines ([Infection Prevention, Control & Immunizations](#)) and the availability of [Personal Protective Equipment](#).

Facilities are encouraged to continue to monitor for compliance with standard hand hygiene practices, using alcohol-based hand rub/hand sanitizer (ABHR/ABHS) as the preferred method of hand hygiene in most clinical situations. If hands are visibly soiled, wash with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Healthcare facilities should ensure that hand hygiene supplies are readily available. Continue to ensure appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) use and availability, such as gloves, gowns, respirators, and eye protection. RCS recommends notifying the local health jurisdiction if the facility is having difficulty accessing PPE.

Information and Resources:

- The CDC site for COVID-19 information: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>.
- CMS site for information on COVID-19 and FAQs: <https://www.cms.gov/medicare/quality-safety-oversight-general-information/coronavirus>
- CMS Emergency Preparedness: <https://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Provider-Enrollment-and-Certification/SurveyCertEmergPrep>.

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- Washington State Department of Health COVID-19 website and hotline number for questions: <https://www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/Coronavirus>. Hotline number: 1-800-525-0127.

Healthcare providers and healthcare facilities must report suspected or confirmed cases of 2019 Novel Coronavirus to their local health jurisdiction. For information on how and when to report, please use this link:

<https://www.doh.wa.gov/ForPublicHealthandHealthcareProviders/NotifiableConditions>

Thank you for your continued commitment to resident health and safety. If you have any questions about the 2019 Novel Coronavirus illness, please contact your local health jurisdiction or DOH. You may also contact [Lisa Herke](#), Nursing Home Policy Program Manager, at (509) 209-3088.

Sincerely,



Candace Goehring, Director
Residential Care Services

DSHS: "Transforming Lives"