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## COVID-19: Guidance for Long-Term Care Facilities

### March 23, 2020

Residents in nursing homes, skilled nursing facilities, and in assisted living facilities are among those at the highest risk of being affected by COVID-19. The residents in these facilities are a more vulnerable population. Many of our community members are wondering about the safety of these residents, preventative measures that can be taken, and what to do if a patient contracts COVID-19. This guidance is based on the currently available information about COVID-19. It will be refined and updated as more information becomes available and as response needs change.

**Review and Comply with [Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment Public Health Order - March 12, 2020](#)** to implement emergency measures to restrict visitors to skilled nursing facilities, assisted living residences, and intermediate care facilities in Colorado to protect the health of the residents. The order also requires facilities to offer alternative communication strategies when restricting visitor access.

#### Guidance for Facilities

##### Educate Residents and Healthcare Personnel

- Share the [latest information about COVID-2019](#)
- Review CDC's [Preparing for COVID-19: Long-term Care Facilities, Nursing Homes](#)
- Review [CDC's Interim Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations for Patients with Confirmed Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) or Persons Under Investigation for COVID-19 in Healthcare Settings.](#)
- Review CDC's [Interim U.S. Guidance for Risk Assessment and Public Health Management of Healthcare Personnel with Potential Exposure in a Healthcare Setting to Patients with Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)
- Review CDC's [Evaluating and Reporting Persons Under Investigation \(PUI\)](#)
- Review [CDPHE's Guidance for Community Health Centers](#) for additional information

##### Educate and train Health Care Professionals (HCP)

- Reinforce sick leave policies. Remind HCP not to report to work when ill.
- Reinforce adherence to infection prevention and control measures, including hand hygiene and selection and use of personal protective equipment (PPE). Have HCP demonstrate competency with putting on and removing PPE.
- Educate both facility-based and consultant personnel (e.g., wound care, podiatry, barber) and volunteers. Including consultants is important because they often provide care in multiple facilities and can be exposed to or serve as a source of pathogen transmission.

- Educate residents and families including:
  - Information about COVID-19
  - Actions the facility is taking to protect them and their loved ones, including visitor restrictions
  - Actions residents and families can take to protect themselves in the facility

### **Provide Supplies for Recommended Infection Prevention and Control Practices**

- Hand hygiene supplies:
  - Put alcohol-based hand sanitizer with 60–95 percent alcohol in every resident room (ideally both inside and outside of the room) and other resident care and common areas (e.g., outside dining hall, in therapy gym).
  - Make sure that sinks are well-stocked with soap and paper towels for handwashing.
- Respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette:
  - Make tissues and facemasks available for coughing people.
  - Consider designating staff to steward those supplies and encourage appropriate use by residents, visitors, and staff.
- Make necessary Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) available in areas where resident care is provided. Put a trash can near the exit inside the resident room to make it easy for staff to discard PPE prior to exiting the room, or before providing care for another resident in the same room. Facilities should have supplies of:
  - Facemasks
  - Respirators (if available and the facility has a respiratory protection program with trained, medically cleared, and fit-tested HCP)
  - Gowns
  - Gloves
  - Eye protection (i.e., face shield or goggles).
- Consider implementing a respiratory protection program that is compliant with the OSHA respiratory protection standard for employees if not already in place. The program should include medical evaluations, training, and fit testing.
- Environmental cleaning and disinfection:
  - Make sure that EPA-registered, hospital-grade disinfectants are available to allow for frequent cleaning of high-touch surfaces and shared resident care equipment.
  - Refer to the [EPA website](#) for EPA-registered disinfectants that have qualified under EPA’s emerging viral pathogens program for use against SARS-CoV-2.

Our goal is to keep our long-term care facilities, residents, and families informed and safe as we continue to navigate COVID-19. We will continue to update you as more information becomes available. In the meantime, you can find more helpful information about COVID-19 at [www.ElPasoCountyHealth.org](http://www.ElPasoCountyHealth.org).

