

TO: Vermont Long-Term Care Facility Staff

FROM: Will Fritch, RN, HAI Coordinator, Vermont Department of Health

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Long-Term Care Facility Advisory

SUMMARY – Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) continues to spread globally. Spread in communities in multiple states has been detected, including an outbreak at a nursing home in Washington that has claimed six lives. This advisory provides requested actions for Long-Term Care Facility staff in Vermont.

REQUESTED ACTIONS

Prevent the introduction of respiratory infections INTO your facility:

- Post signs at the entrance instructing visitors not to visit if they have symptoms of respiratory infection.
- Ensure sick leave policies allow employees to stay home if they have symptoms of respiratory infection.
- Assess residents' symptoms of respiratory infection upon admission to the facility and implement appropriate infection prevention practices for incoming symptomatic residents.

Prevent the spread of respiratory infections WITHIN your facility:

- Keep residents and employees informed.
 - Describe what actions the facility is taking to protect them, including answering their questions and explaining what they can do to protect themselves and their fellow residents.
- Monitor residents and employees for fever or respiratory symptoms.
 - Restrict residents with fever or acute respiratory symptoms to their room. If they must leave the room for medically necessary procedures, have them wear a face mask (if tolerated).
 - In general, for care of residents with undiagnosed respiratory infection use Standard, Contact, and Droplet Precautions with eye protection unless suspected diagnosis requires Airborne Precautions (e.g., tuberculosis).
 - Health care personnel should monitor the Health Department's website to understand COVID-19 activity in the state to help inform their evaluation of individuals with unknown respiratory illness. If there is transmission of COVID-19 in the community, in addition to implementing the precautions described above for residents with acute respiratory infection, facilities should also consult with public health authorities for additional guidance.

- Support hand and respiratory hygiene, as well as cough etiquette by residents, visitors, and employees.
 - Ensure employees clean their hands according to [CDC guidelines](#), including before and after contact with residents, after contact with contaminated surfaces or equipment, and after removing personal protective equipment (PPE).
 - Put alcohol-based hand rub in every resident room (ideally both inside and outside of the room).
 - Make sure tissues are available and any sink is well-stocked with soap and paper towels for hand washing.
- Identify dedicated employees to care for COVID-19 patients and provide infection control training.
 - Guidance on implementing recommended infection prevention practices is available in CDC's free online course — [The Nursing Home Infection Preventionist Training](#) — which includes resources checklists for facilities and employees to use.
- Provide the right supplies to ensure easy and correct use of PPE.
 - Post [signs](#) on the door or wall outside of the resident room that clearly describe the type of precautions needed and required PPE.
 - Make PPE, including facemasks, eye protection, gowns, and gloves, available immediately outside of the resident room.
 - Position a trash can near the exit inside any resident room to make it easy for employees to discard PPE.

Prevent the spread of respiratory germs BETWEEN facilities:

- Notify facilities prior to transferring a resident with an acute respiratory illness, including suspected or confirmed COVID-19, to a higher level of care.
- Report any possible COVID-19 illness in residents or employees to the Health Department at (802) 863-7240.

If you have any questions, please contact the HAN Coordinator at 802-859-5900 or vthan@vermont.gov.

HAN Message Type Definitions

Health Alert: Conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

Health Advisory: Provides important information for a specific incident or situation may not require immediate action.

Health Update: Provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.

Info Service Message: Provides general correspondence from VDH, which is not necessarily considered to be of an emergent nature.