



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

March 19, 2024

ALTSA: AFH #2024-009  
ALTSA: ALF #2024-008  
ALTSA: ESF #2024-008  
ALTSA: CCRSS #2024-006  
ALTSA: NH #2024-012

**CHANGE IN COMMUNITY COVID-19 GUIDANCE**

Dear Administrator/Provider:

This letter is to inform you that on March 1, 2024, the CDC issued updates and simplified respiratory virus recommendations. This updated guidance is intended for Community Long-term care (LTC) settings. This includes Adult Family Homes (AFH), Assisted Living Facilities (ALF), Enhanced Services Facilities (ESF) and Certified Community Residential Supports & Services (CCRSS). This letter clarifies that there is no change to COVID-19 guidance for the Nursing Home setting.

The updated and simplified CDC community guidance adopts a unified approach for all respiratory viruses (including COVID-19) to limit disease spread. The updated guidance includes core steps and specific sections with additional considerations for those who are at higher risk of severe illness from respiratory viruses.

**Recommendations on Core Prevention Steps and Strategies Include:**

- **Staying up to date with vaccination** to protect people against serious illness, hospitalization, and death. This includes flu, COVID-19, and RSV if eligible.
- **Practicing good hygiene** by covering coughs and sneezes, washing or sanitizing hands often, and cleaning frequently touched surfaces.
- **Taking steps for cleaner air**, such as bringing in more fresh outside air, purifying indoor air, or gathering outdoors.

**Updated Community Guidance for People Who Are Sick With a Respiratory Virus Include:**

- **Isolate** - Stay home and away from others when ill.
- **Treat** - For COVID-19 and influenza, treatment is available and can lessen symptoms and lower the risk of severe illness.
- **May return to normal activities when all are true for at least 24 hours:**
  - Symptoms are improving overall, **AND**
  - Fever has been gone without use of a fever-reducing medication.
- **Once normal activities are resumed** - additional prevention strategies for the next 5 days are encouraged to curb disease spread such as:
  - Taking more steps for cleaner air.
  - Enhancing hygiene practices.
  - Wearing a well-fitting mask.
  - Keeping a distance from others, and/or
  - Getting tested for respiratory viruses.

**RCS IPC regulatory visits will focus on standard and transmission-based precautions.**

Updated forms for AFH, ALF, ESF and CCRSS Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) inspection and investigation can be found on the DSHS forms site.

**References:**

[CDC updates and simplifies respiratory virus recommendations](#)

[CDC Respiratory Virus Guidance](#)

[Risk Factors for Severe Illness from Respiratory Viruses](#)

- [Older Adults](#)
- [Young Children](#)
- [People with Weakened Immune Systems](#)
- [People with Disabilities](#)
- [Pregnant People](#)

**Nursing Home references for COVID-19:**

[Interim Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations for Healthcare Personnel During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) Pandemic](#)

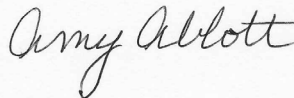
[Interim Guidance for Managing Healthcare Personnel with SARS-CoV-2 Infection or Exposure to SARS-CoV-2](#)

Thank you for your continued commitment to resident health and safety. If you have any questions, please contact your local RCS Field Manager.

**OR**

If you have any questions, please contact Infection Prevention and Control and Emergency Preparedness Unit [ipc.epteam@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:ipc.epteam@dshs.wa.gov)

Sincerely,



Amy Abbott, Director  
Residential Care Services

DSHS: "Transforming Lives"