

**County of Santa Clara Public Health
Department Long-Term Care Facilities
COVID-19 Toolkit
March 2019 (version 1.0)**

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Introduction to the toolkit

This toolkit was created as a resource for long-term care facilities (LTCF) such as skilled nursing facilities (SNF), assisted living facilities (ALF), and independent living facilities (ILF) to respond to the novel coronavirus outbreak. It is intended to be used by facility staff working collaboratively with the Santa Clara County Public Health Department (SCCPHD).

The toolkit contains resources including information about communicable diseases, when to report to public health, recommended control measures, sample communications, and links to resources.

How to use the toolkit

The toolkit is intended to be a resource to prepare for and respond to novel coronavirus. Because facilities vary, each will need to tailor this toolkit to their situation. Therefore, it should stimulate discussions about how your particular facility will respond to a potential outbreak. It does not replace working collaboratively with SCCPHD during the outbreak itself.

COVID-19 Guidance and Strategies for Long-Term Healthcare Facilities and Assisted or Independent Living Facilities in Santa Clara County

<https://www.sccgov.org/sites/phd-p/Diseases/novel-coronavirus/Documents/LTCF-Mitigation-Plan-03062020.pdf>

Background

The County of Santa Clara Public Health Department is closely monitoring the ongoing COVID-19 situation. As of March 10, 2020, a total of 52 people have tested positive for the virus in Santa Clara County, and we expect that number to continue increasing over the coming days. This indicates that the novel coronavirus is circulating in our community, and that there is some level of community transmission occurring in our area. While information about risk factors for COVID-19 is still evolving, the best evidence currently available makes clear that risk of severe illness from COVID-19 begins to increase at age 50 and increases with age. Older residents of long-term care facilities (LTCFs) including nursing homes, skilled nursing facilities, assisted living facilities, and independent living facilities appear to be particularly at risk for rapid transmission of and severe disease from COVID-19, including death. We have seen this occur in the outbreak of COVID-19 in a long-term care facility in the Seattle area, which has led to severe illness and death among the residents of that facility. Therefore, the best strategy is to do everything possible to prevent the introduction of the virus into your facility.

Recommendations

The Santa Clara County Public Health Department recommends that all long-term care facilities and assisted or independent living facilities take immediate steps to prepare for increases of COVID-19 in the community by meeting with administration/leadership, activating emergency operations, and rapidly implementing the following actions.

1. Plan and prepare for COVID-19 at your facility
 - a. Assign a person(s) responsible for implementing these COVID-19 prevention activities and reporting to Public Health.
 - b. Review your facilities emergency operations, medical surge, pandemic influenza plans/flu plans.
 - c. Consider the need to restrict COVID-19 cases to certain rooms and consider the possible need for a dedicated wing or other area exclusively for COVID-19 patients.
 - d. Post signs at the entrance instructing visitors not to visit if they have symptoms of respiratory infection.
 - e. Minimize social gatherings at your facility. During essential gatherings, such as mealtimes, encourage residents and staff to maintain an arm's length between one another,
 - f. Maintain good hand hygiene and cough etiquette and have wipes available for use.
 - g. Put alcohol-based hand sanitizer in every resident room (ideally both inside and outside of the room) and ensure a stable supply.
 - h. Make sure tissues and waste receptacles are widely available and all sinks are well-stocked with soap and paper towels for hand washing.
 - i. Provide the right supplies to ensure easy and correct use of PPE when needed.
 - i. Post signs on the door or wall outside of the resident room that clearly describe the type of precautions needed and required PPE.
 - ii. Make PPE, including facemasks, eye protection, gowns, and gloves, available immediately outside of the resident room.

- iii. Position a trash can near the exit inside any resident room to make it easy for employees to discard PPE.
 - j. Review CDPH All Facilities Letter 20-17 guidance for program flex: <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CHCQ/LCP/Pages/AFL-18-09.aspx>
- 2. Educate staff, residents, and families
 - a. Communicate about COVID-19 with your staff, residents, and their families about what is currently known about COVID-19. Make sure your staff know about the potential for surge and your facility's preparedness plans.
 - b. Make sure all employees know the symptoms of COVID-19 and how they can protect themselves and their patients.
 - c. Identify dedicated employees to care for COVID-19 cases and provide these employees with infection control training.
 - i. 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.
 - ii. <https://www.cdc.gov/longtermcare/training.html>
- 3. Screen staff, residents, and visitors
 - a. Discourage all non-essential visitors.
 - b. Implement a screening program where all staff and essential visitors are actively checked prior to entry for symptoms of respiratory infection or fever. Staff with any symptom (even just cough) should not report to work or enter the facility until 3 days after their symptoms have resolved.
 - c. Ensure that your sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidance and that employees are aware of these policies.
 - d. Actively monitor and assess all residents, including new residents, for symptoms of respiratory infection.
 - i. For more details, see the FAQs below
- 4. Provide proper infection control for ill persons
 - a. Restrict residents with fever or acute respiratory symptoms to their room. They should be moved to a private room if not in one. If they must leave the room for medically necessary procedures, have them wear a facemask or tissue to cover nose and mouth if the facemask is not tolerated.
 - b. Any resident with respiratory symptoms should receive care from dedicated staff using appropriate infection prevention practices.
 - c. Adhere to infection control guidelines for any resident with respiratory illness. 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).
 - d. For more details, see the FAQs below
- 5. Notify and communicate
 - a. Notify facilities prior to transferring a resident with any acute respiratory illness, including suspected or confirmed COVID-19, to another facility, including a higher level of care.
 - b. If a resident becomes ill with respiratory illness, consult their physician first. Report any possible COVID-19 illness in residents or employees to the Santa Clara County Public Health Department at 408-885-4214.
 - i. For more details, see the FAQs below.

These recommendations supplement the 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](#) and are specific for nursing homes and assisted living facilities. This information complements, but does not replace, the general IPC recommendations for COVID-19.

This guidance is based on the currently available information about COVID-19. This approach will be refined and updated as more information becomes available and as response needs change in the United States. It is important to understand transmission dynamics in the community to inform strategies to prevent introduction or spread of COVID-19 in your facility. Consultation with public health authorities can help you better understand if transmission of COVID-19 is occurring in your community.

Resources

Infection preventionist training: www.cdc.gov/longtermcare

CDC resources for healthcare facilities: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/healthcare-facilities/index.html>

SCCPHD Public Novel Coronavirus Homepage: www.sccphd.org/coronavirus

SCCPHD Provider Novel Coronavirus Homepage:
<https://www.sccgov.org/sites/phd-p/Diseases/novel-coronavirus/Pages/home.aspx>

CDPH Novel Coronavirus Homepage
<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/nCOV2019.aspx>

CDC Novel Coronavirus 2019-CoV Homepage:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

Frequently Asked Questions

Where can I find Santa Clara County Public Health Department's most recent guidance for long-term care facilities?

Visit: <https://www.sccgov.org/sites/phd-p/Diseases/novel-coronavirus/Pages/home.aspx>

What should be included in staff training for COVID-19?

All long-term care personnel should be trained on the basics of COVID-19, including clinical signs and symptoms, and basics of prevention including hand washing and personal hygiene.

Staff that have been designated to care for respiratory patients including COVID-19 should receive training on infection prevention and control, emphasizing:

- Use of standard, contact, and droplet precautions with eye protection for any undiagnosed ailment symptomatic of COVID-19.
- Use of appropriate PPE for persons with respiratory illness, including proper donning and doffing
- One resource is CDC's course on infection prevention in LTC:
<https://www.cdc.gov/longtermcare/training.html>

What types of resident gatherings or activities should be restricted?

All group field trips and any nonessential gatherings should be cancelled. For essential gatherings such as meals, residents should be spaced at least 6 feet apart. Any ill residents should take meals in their room.

Should residents be allowed to leave the facility?

Residents should not be allowed to attend large gatherings in the community. Residents who are leaving the facility for other purposes should be advised that there is transmission of COVID-19 within the community and that if they contract COVID-19 they are at increased risk of developing severe disease.

How should residents be monitored?

All residents should be actively monitored (at least daily) for fever and respiratory symptoms (shortness of breath, new or change in cough, and sore throat). In the elderly, symptoms of respiratory illness may be less evident and could manifest only as confusion or mental status changes. *If a resident has a fever or new symptoms of a respiratory illness, the facility should:*

- Institute appropriate infection prevention and control measures, including:
 - Have the patient immediately wear a facemask
 - Isolate the patient to a single room
 - Use appropriate PPE with contact and droplet precautions
- Consult with a medical provider regarding the need to transfer residents to a higher level of care and/or COVID-19 testing.
- Notify the Santa Clara Public Health Department at 408-885-4214

What are the guidelines regarding visitors?

Facilities should screen all visitors for symptoms of respiratory illness

- Any visitors with respiratory symptoms should not be allowed entry to the facility.

Facilities should also restrict all non-essential visitors. While it is up to the facility to define who an essential visitor is, it is recommended that the following people not be allowed into the facility:

- Have fever, cough, or other symptoms of respiratory illness.
- Anyone under 15 years of age.
- Non-essential personnel including volunteers and non-essential consultant personnel (e.g., barbers) from entering the building.
- Family members who have traveled overseas may visit facility unless they traveled to a country with a level 2 or 3 travel warning (China, Japan, Iran, Italy, South Korea) in the prior 14 days.
- Outside vendors are fine if they are following food safety guidelines and business guidelines for COVID-19.

When should facility staff stay home?

Facilities should actively monitor staff for any signs or symptoms of respiratory illness. Respiratory symptoms include: cough, sore throat, fever, congestion, sneezing, and runny nose. Any employee with ANY respiratory illness symptom should not come to work until three days after complete resolution of symptoms.

- Active monitoring means that the facility must ensure that each employee documents the absence of symptoms and signs, every day prior to entry to the facility. This could include temperature checks at the facility entrance.

Staff who have visited any countries or regions with a level 2 or 3 travel notice should stay home for 14 days following return. Check CDC website for travel notices.

What if the employee just has a cough?

It is up to the facility to understand when a cough is due to another reason (i.e., chronic condition such as COPD, allergies, or asthma), versus a possible infection. Staff who have a cough for non-infectious reasons do not need to be excluded.

Should residents be allowed to bring in outside food?

Outside vendors are fine if they are following food safety guidelines and business guidelines for COVID-19.

Who do I contact about Program Flex?

CDPH District Office 100 Paseo de San Antonio, Suite 235, San Jose, CA 95113

District Manager: Maria Escudero -- Phone: (408) 277-1784 Toll Free: (800) 554-0348 Fax: (408) 277-1032

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/CDPH%20Document%20Library/ControlledForms/cdph5000a.pdf>

This form is to be used ONLY for program flexibility requests when hospitals or healthcare facility temporarily need to comply with licensing requirements by using alternative concepts, methods, procedures, techniques, equipment, or personnel.



ATTENTION VISITORS!

**Do not visit if you have any of
the following symptoms:**

fever, cough, sore throat, sneezing, runny nose,
or shortness of breath

**Do not visit unless it is
absolutely necessary, even if
you do not have symptoms**

Santa Clara County is currently experiencing an
outbreak of COVID-19. Please take an outbreak
fact sheet for your reference.

COVID-19 ILLNESS OUTBREAK

FACT SHEET FOR LONG-TERM CARE

What is COVID-19?

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person. Coronaviruses are thought to spread through the air by coughing and sneezing and close personal contact, or by touching contaminated objects or surfaces then touching your mouth, nose or eyes.

What are common symptoms of COVID-19?

Reported illnesses have ranged from mild symptoms to severe illness and death for confirmed COVID-19 cases. Please note that the following symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure.

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

How does COVID-19 spread?

COVID-19 can be spread through:

- Direct contact with an infected person
- Contact with respiratory droplets from an infected person (when an infected person coughs or sneezes)
- Contact with contaminated surfaces

What we are doing to prevent illness

We are taking steps to prevent the further spread of illness. These steps may include:

- Using masks, gloves, and other personal protective equipment such as gowns when caring for ill residents
- Ensuring staff are washing their hands frequently
- Cleaning frequently touched surfaces

- Asking residents to stay in their rooms and canceling group activities
- Serving meals in rooms
- Asking visitors to consider visiting at another time

What you can do to help prevent illness

Please do not visit at this time, unless it is absolutely essential. Our residents are at the highest risk for severe disease and death from COVID-19 due to their age and underlying medical problems.

If it is absolutely essential that you visit, please take these steps to protect you and your loved one:

- Wash your hands
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth
- Cover your coughs with a tissue or your sleeve

If you are sick with any of the common symptoms, we request that you do not visit until at least 3 days after your symptoms have resolved.

If you choose to visit, make sure to check in at the front desk and/or nurses' station. You may be asked to wash your hands, wear a mask, or take other measures to help prevent the spread of illness and to protect you and your loved one.

Please talk to a staff member if you have any questions or concerns. Thank you for helping us prevent the spread of illness!

References and resources

- Santa Clara County Public Health Department
www.sccgov.org/coronavirus
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV

Appendix A: References and Resources

Respiratory outbreaks

CDC. Interim Guidance for Influenza Outbreak Management in Long-Term Care Facilities. February 2017. <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/infectioncontrol/ltc-facility-guidance.htm>.

CDPH. Recommendations for the Prevention and Control of Influenza in California Skilled Nursing Facilities (SNF). October 2018. https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CHCQ/HAI/CDPH%20Document%20Library/RecommendationsForThePreventionAndControlOfInfluenzaNov2018_FINAL.pdf.

CDPH. All Facilities Letter 18-08. Influenza Outbreaks in Long-Term Care Facilities. January 2018. <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CHCQ/LCP/Pages/AFL-18-08.aspx>.