



# COVID-19

## COVID-19 Guidance for Long-Term Care, Assisted Living and Residential Facilities

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The Alaska Department of Health and Social Services is closely monitoring the rapidly evolving Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. While details about COVID-19 are still emerging, the CDC has determined that older adults and individuals with serious chronic medical conditions like heart disease, lung disease and diabetes are at higher risk for severe illness.

Long-term care, assisted living and residential facilities in Alaska should continue to implement their existing infection control plans and work with their infection preventionists (IP) to control respiratory illnesses, including COVID-19.

### Recommendations:

1. Know your infection preventionist's name and phone number. Discuss with your IP what to do with potential COVID-19 cases in a resident, staff or visitor. Know what to do if questions or concerns arise about current infection control practices.
2. Review current infection control plans for preventing communicable and infectious disease among residents, visitors and staff.
3. Assure that the infection control plan has the following recommended components:
  - a. Surveillance to detect an acute respiratory illness and what to do if there's a suspected case of COVID-19 in a resident or staff member.
  - b. Procedures for direct care staff to use standard, droplet and contact precautions for residents with symptoms of an acute respiratory infection.
  - c. Criteria and protocols for enforcing visitor limitations.
  - d. A plan or procedure for cohorting symptomatic residents or groups using one or more of the following strategies:
    - i. Process for a medical evaluation or testing of an ill resident with an acute respiratory illness.
    - ii. Confining symptomatic residents and exposed roommates to their rooms.
    - iii. Placing symptomatic residents together in one area of the facility.
    - iv. Closing units where symptomatic and asymptomatic residents reside and resident placement plans.

- v. Cohorting staff on either affected or non-affected units to prevent transmission between units.
  - vi. Closing communal dining halls.
  - vii. Canceling events in the facility where many people come together.
  - viii. Cleaning and disinfecting high touch surfaces with EPA-registered disinfectant with label claim of effectiveness against human coronavirus or emerging viral pathogens.
4. Educate staff, residents and family members about COVID-19 and what to do if they have questions or concerns.
  5. Prominently display posters and signs to:
    - a. Remind visitors to stay home if they have a fever, cough or feel ill.
    - b. Provide general information about COVID-19.
    - c. Encourage good hygiene habits including handwashing, cough etiquette and not touching the face.
  6. Review current staff policies and procedures for ill employees.
    - a. Personnel, other caregivers and volunteers should not report to the facility if they are symptomatic with fever or respiratory symptoms and must report any symptoms to occupational health at the facility.
    - b. Know how to handle personnel who develop symptoms while at work.
    - c. Identify minimum staffing needs and prioritize critical and non-essential services based on residents' health status and functional limitations/disabilities.
    - d. Develop contingency staffing.

If your facility doesn't have an infectious disease plan, now is the time to develop one. Use information from these CDC websites to guide your efforts:

- [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/infection-control/](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/infection-control/)
- [www.cdc.gov/longtermcare/](http://www.cdc.gov/longtermcare/)

Additional guidance can be online at:

- Interim Additional Guidance for Infection Prevention and Control for Patients with Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19 in Nursing Homes  
[www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/healthcare-facilities/prevent-spread-in-long-term-care-facilities.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/healthcare-facilities/prevent-spread-in-long-term-care-facilities.html)
- Recommendations for Long Term Care Facilities During COVID-19 Outbreak  
[www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/NovelCoronavirusOutbreak2020/LongTermCareFacilities](http://www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/NovelCoronavirusOutbreak2020/LongTermCareFacilities)
- Guidance for Persons Who are at Higher Risk for Serious Illness  
[www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/NovelCoronavirusOutbreak2020/HigherRiskforSeriousIllness](http://www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/NovelCoronavirusOutbreak2020/HigherRiskforSeriousIllness)
- Senior Center Administrator and Employee Resources and Recommendations  
[www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/NovelCoronavirusOutbreak2020/SeniorCenterRecommendationsandResources](http://www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/NovelCoronavirusOutbreak2020/SeniorCenterRecommendationsandResources)