

# Coronavirus Preparedness Mission Critical for Wisconsin Long-term Care & Assisted Living Facilities

Long-term care and assisted living facilities should have an effective COVID-19 response plan in place. A facility may or may not be able to fulfill its mission of serving its residents' health care needs if it is not prepared for such an emergency. The current data on COVID-19 indicates that the elderly and individuals with serious chronic medical conditions are among those more at risk to contract COVID-19 and, if contracted, are at a greater risk of serious illness.

Long-term care and assisted living facility leadership need to consider how to address exposure and contagion issues with staff while complying with employment laws, including OSHA, the Americans with Disabilities Act, FMLA/Leaves of Absence, and more.

Long-term care and assisted living facilities face significant challenges in containing and treating COVID-19 and need to consider the following, as further discussed in [Coronavirus Preparedness for Long-Term Care and Assisted Living Facilities](#):

- Facilities need to engage in a candid and comprehensive assessment of the adequacy of their current infection control capabilities and health care worker protection programs.
- Facilities are encouraged to support hand and respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette by employees, residents and visitors.
- Facilities should have an aggressive system in place to screen residents, visitors, staff and volunteers for signs of COVID-19 and restrict individuals showing such signs.
- Facilities should consider identifying dedicated employees to care for COVID-19 residents and provide infection control training to staff.
- Facilities should provide the right supplies to ensure easy and correct use of personal protective equipment.
- Facilities transferring residents should notify the receiving facility prior to transferring a resident with an acute respiratory illness, including suspected or confirmed COVID-19.
- Non-emergency surveys of nursing homes, home health agencies, hospices,

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and ICF/IIDs are temporarily suspended in order to focus on the most serious health and safety threats like infectious disease and abuse.

- Facilities should address special procedures in their COVID-19 protocols to protect the privacy and confidentiality of COVID-19 patients and exposed health care workers in compliance with HIPAA and Wisconsin privacy and confidentiality laws.
- Licensees, administrators, owners, operators and governing bodies should be aware of the facility's efforts to develop a COVID-19 response plan and ensure the general adequacy of that plan.
- Facilities should review and update their health care worker protection programs and employment-related policies to plan for the potential impact of COVID-19 on their employees.

If you have any questions about how to prevent and prepare for COVID-19, please reach out to Robert Lightfoot or your Reinhart attorney.

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