

Long-Term Care & Assisted Living Facilities Should Update Infection Prevention During COVID-19 Outbreak

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) issued [updated guidance for long-term care and assisted living facilities regarding COVID-19](#) infection prevention procedures. Facilities should consider a few key items when updating their processes:

- Non-emergency surveys are suspended temporarily for both nursing homes and assisted living facilities in order to focus on the most serious health and safety threats like infectious disease and abuse. In the event a survey takes place, DQA will have screened its surveyors to avoid risk of exposure or transmission of COVID-19.
- Facilities should screen all health care workers for fever and respiratory symptoms when entering their facility prior to every shift. Facilities should allow all essential health care workers caring for residents, including hospice workers, EMS personnel and dialysis technicians, to enter the facility so long as they are screened by the facility and meet the [CDC's guidelines for health care workers](#). Facilities should identify all staff who work in multiple facilities and implement appropriate screening.

In addition to the revised guidance, DHS recently addressed common questions it received from long-term care and assisted living facilities. Facilities should also consider the following:

- Facilities should continue to admit new residents. [Facilities should screen potential residents remotely to the extent possible](#) (e.g., phone interviews with the potential resident, family members and transferring facility), otherwise facilities should implement their standard admission screening procedures.
- Facilities must suspend all communal dining and group activities. Reinhart shareholder [Bob Lightfoot discusses this measure and others after attending a DHS webinar](#).
- Facilities should implement active screening for all residents. This means at a minimum, twice daily vital signs including temperature and screening for

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respiratory symptoms.

- Nursing Homes are expected to benefit from the blanket [1135 waiver issued by the Department of Health and Human Services](#) that waives certain conditions of participation and certification requirements among other things. Assisted living facilities should consider applying for waivers from DHS as needed. Reinhart is working with the state associations to develop template waiver forms for your use. Waiver subjects may include pre-employment screens and training. DHS is considering more blanket-type waivers for Community-Based Residential Facilities (CBRF) and Residential Care Apartment Complexes (RCAC).
- Facilities forced to operate with low levels of PPE due to [supply chain disruptions](#) or other reasons should consider face masks and gloves the most important PPE. Trucks with PPE from the National Strategic Stockpile have arrived in Wisconsin and if you have applied for distribution of this PPE, DHS is determining how to distribute it, though it is clear nursing homes will be the priority.

Governor Evers is [anticipated to issue a "Safer-at-Home" order](#) to go into effect this week. We anticipate that this order will require facilities to further limit resident interactions with the greater community similar to the suggestion of the State of Wisconsin Board on Aging and Long Term Care.

DHS also issued updated [guidance for facilities regarding visitor restrictions](#).

Please contact a member of Reinhart's [Health Care Practice](#) with any questions you may have.

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