

Frequently Asked Questions about...

Infection Prevention Regulatory Requirements for Nursing Homes

Q. What are nursing homes?

A. Nursing homes (NHs) are permanent facilities whose primary function is the continued provision of health-related services to patients who may require various types of long-term care, such as skilled care or intermediate care.

Q. Are there any federal regulations available to guide infection control practices in nursing homes?

A. Yes. The Nursing Home Survey Guidelines for Infection Control F441, developed by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), have been in effect for over twenty years and were most recently revised in the fall of 2009. It states that each NH must establish and maintain an Infection Control Program designed to provide a safe, sanitary, and comfortable environment and to help prevent the development and transmission of disease and infection, and addresses:

- Investigating, controlling, and preventing infections in the facility
- Deciding what procedures, such as isolation, should be applied to an individual resident
- Maintaining a record of incidents and corrective actions related to infections

The facility must support infection control practices, including:

- Prohibiting employees with a communicable disease or infected skin lesions from direct contact with residents or their food, if direct contact will transmit the disease
- Requiring staff to wash their hands after each direct resident contact when indicated
- Requiring personnel to handle, store, process, and transport linens appropriately to prevent the spread of infection

Q. What additional nursing home regulations guide the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) Office of Licensure and Certification (OLC)?

A. The *Code of Virginia* 12 VAC 5-360-20 and Title 32.1, Chapter 5, Article 1: Hospital and Nursing Home Licensure and Inspection outline additional nursing home requirements, including:

- If the facility provides care through Medicare and Medicaid programs, it is deemed a "Certified nursing facility" and must be in compliance with both federal and state laws
- A NH must be licensed/certified in order to be owned, maintained, managed, or operated
- NHs are inspected at least every other year by the Office of Licensure and Certification
- NHs must have at least one licensed physician on call at all times
- Each NH must provide or arrange for the administration of an annual vaccination against influenza and a pneumococcal vaccination to its residents unless otherwise indicated

Contact your facility's OLC supervisor if you have additional questions about regulatory requirements for nursing homes