## COVID-19: Role of Public Health and Long Term Care Facilities (LTCF) in Preparedness and Response Efforts

**Topic** | **Public Health Role** | **LTCF Role**
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**Testing** | • Assist in identifying resources for diagnostic testing for LTCF, including private and public testing options  
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• Provide recommendations regarding testing strategy, including baseline testing, serial testing, or testing related to outbreak response  
• Together with partners, Public Health may assist in developing solutions to support ongoing testing in LTCF (HCW) staff as needed. | • Implement testing recommendations for residents and staff per guidelines  
  o For Skilled Nursing Facilities (SNF), refer to VDH, CDC and CMS guidance (e.g. baseline testing and repeat testing as appropriate)  
  o For Assisted Living Facilities (ALF), refer to Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) guidance  
• Ensure access to diagnostic and follow-up testing for both residents and staff. This includes adequate capacity to obtain, administer, and process those tests.

**Data/Reporting** | • Provide aggregate information and data about LTCF cases, deaths and outbreaks | • Report all outbreaks (LTCFs licensed by any state program) and all positive cases (SNFs) to VDH in accordance with the *Regulations for Disease Reporting and Control*.

**PPE and Cloth face coverings** | • Make recommendations for the appropriate use and/or optimization of (medical-grade) PPE (for health care workers) and cloth face coverings (e.g. other staff, visitors, etc), guided by CDC recommendations  
• If urgent shortages are identified, assist the facility in identifying potential sources for PPE and/or assuring connections with partners such as Regional Health Care Coalitions (SNF) and/or Department of Social Services (ALF). | • Ensure access to an adequate supply of PPE for healthcare staff and other relevant staff. Ensure education/instruction for donning and doffing PPE.  
• Ensure that other relevant individuals (e.g. residents and visitors) have access to cloth face coverings to help slow the spread of disease.
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## Identification of Cases
- Follow-up on reports of suspected and confirmed cases
- Identify potential source(s) of exposure for the case, and identify all close contacts
- Enroll cases in active monitoring with Local Health Department (LHD) or facility occupational health
- Partner with LTCF clinical and administrative leadership to establish a system to monitor exposed staff and residents
- Preserve the anonymity of patients and practitioners, according to §32.1-41 of the *Code of Virginia*. In situations where divulging a patient’s name may be required to identify other potentially exposed individuals, VDH will seek permission from the patient for release of information; the release will be conducted in the most minimally compromising manner (such as to a single point of contact in the LTCF Medical Director or Director of Nursing or Infection Prevention point of contact).

## Isolation of Cases
- Provide recommendations for appropriate isolation/cohorting of patients.
- Provide recommendations regarding discontinuation of isolation or return to work guidance, based on the VDH symptom-, time-, or test-based strategy as appropriate.

## Follow-up with Contacts of Cases/Outbreak Response
- Ensure that all contacts of cases, within the facility and in the community, have been identified and placed under symptom monitoring and quarantine. Refer contacts for testing as recommended.
- Release from quarantine as indicated, or coordinate for medical care/evaluation if symptoms develop.

## Preparedness and Response Efforts
- Distribute educational messages to residents, visitors and staff about COVID-19 symptoms and steps to take if they become ill
- Actively screen all residents for signs/symptoms of COVID-19 daily
- Actively screen all HCP and staff for signs/symptoms of COVID-19 prior to each shift
- Report suspected and confirmed cases to LHD. Assist public health in follow-up of cases
- Partner with LHD to assess any potential HCP or staff exposures and enroll exposed persons into monitoring
- Protect the confidentiality of residents and staff who are part of Case and Contact Investigations
- Implement recommendations for cleaning/disinfection, including areas where cases have been
- Implement cohorting of residents, according to guidance
  - For SNF, refer to VDH, CDC and CMS guidance
  - For ALFs, refer to VDSS guidance
- Provide regular updates to LHD on the number and locations of residents and staff exposed, asymptomatic, and symptomatic.
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**Infection Prevention and Control (IPC)**
- Coordinate outbreak investigations; provide specific disease prevention and control recommendations to reduce spread of disease.
- Provide recommendations for COVID-19 infection prevention and control in LTCF settings, including assurance of training.
- Provide information about training opportunities related to infection prevention and control.
- Use case, contact and outbreak data to inform recommendations for disease prevention and control.
- Implement infection control guidance pertaining to screening, universal source control, cohorting, proper use of PPE and/or face coverings, cohorting plans.
- Implement transmission-based precautions per CDC guidance.
- Consider strategies to manage new admissions or readmissions of residents to limit the introduction and/or transmission of COVID-19 within the facility.
- Consider and implement appropriate strategies pertaining to visitation, communal dining, group activities, non-essential staff/visitors, trips outside the facility, etc.
- Assure appropriate training for staff on infection prevention and control.
- Assign an individual with training in infection prevention and control to provide onsite management of COVID-19 prevention and response activities.

**Communications/Other**
- Provide health education messages and messages to reduce the spread of disease.
- Coordinate with facility on public communication (e.g., press releases, media inquiries, etc).
- Communicate summary information on the number of cases and contacts in the jurisdiction, district, and/or region to provide situational awareness for LTCF. Ensure that anonymity of
- Widely communicate prevention and control messages, including information about outbreaks, disease prevention and control recommendations, steps to take if illness develops, etc.
- Promote flu vaccination when available and COVID-19 vaccination (if it becomes available).
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VDH/OEPI v.06/15/2020