On March 13, 2020, Governor Greg Abbott declared a state of disaster for all counties in Texas due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Governor Abbott also directed state agencies to restrict visitation at nursing homes to protect the most vulnerable to COVID-19. In addition, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) directed all nursing facilities to restrict visitation and limit access to all but those providing essential services.

The Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) is committed to sharing pertinent COVID-19 information with all nursing facilities via a regularly updated Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) document.

With each update, information contained in the FAQ document will be arranged by date, and if guidance changes from a previous week’s FAQs, it will be noted in red font. Questions regarding these FAQs can be directed to Long-term Care Regulatory Policy, Rules & Training at 512-438-3161 or PolicyRulesTraining@hhsc.state.tx.us.

March 16-20, 2020

Should a NF readmit a resident who has been hospitalized when the resident is released from the hospital?

Answer: Yes. A nursing home should readmit a resident after hospitalization. If the resident was diagnosed with COVID-19 they should be admitted under transmission-based precautions for COVID-19. If a nursing home is unable to comply with the requirements for transmission-based precautions, readmission must wait until these precautions are discontinued. CDC has released Interim Guidance for Discontinuing Transmission-Based Precautions or In-Home Isolation for Persons with Laboratory-confirmed COVID-19.

Note: Per CMS guidance, nursing homes should admit any individual they would normally admit to their facility, including individuals from hospitals where a case of COVID-19 was/is present. Also, if possible, dedicate a unit/wing exclusively for any residents coming or returning from the hospital. This can serve as a step-down unit where they remain for 14 days with no symptoms (instead of integrating as usual on short-term rehab floor, or returning to long-stay original room).
**Should** **NF residents be confined to their rooms?**

**Answer:** If a resident is under transmission-based precautions, then they should be confined to their rooms. CMS has directed the following:

- Cancel communal dining and all group activities, such as internal and external group activities.
- Implement active screening of residents and staff for fever and respiratory symptoms.
- Remind residents to practice social distancing and perform frequent hand hygiene.

See CMS [QSO-20-14-NH](https://www.cdc.gov Long-Term Care/Policy-and-Operations/Prevent-the-Spread-of-Sickness/Transmission-Based-Precautions/), Appendix PP, F880.

**Is it okay for family members to do laundry for residents and leave it at the front door? If so, how do they get the laundry?**

**Answer:** It is not recommended at this time. Nursing facilities are required to have policies and procedures in place which require staff to handle, store, process, and transport all linens and laundry in accordance with accepted national standards in order to produce hygienically clean laundry and prevent the spread of infection to the extent possible. See guidance in CMS SOM Appendix PP, F880.

**If there is a fire or an emergency medical situation, do emergency responders need to be screened before entering a NF?**

**Answer:** The required screenings do not apply to emergency services personnel entering the facility in an emergency situation such as a fire or a resident requiring life-saving actions. See [CDC guidance](https://www.cdc.gov Long-Term Care/Policy-and-Operations/Prevent-the-Spread-of-Sickness/Transmission-Based-Precautions/), CMS QSO-20-14-NH and CMS SOM Appendix PP, F880.

**Are vendors that inspect, test, and maintain fire systems considered essential, and should they be granted entry into a NF?**

**Answer:** Yes. These are considered essential services, and these vendors should be granted access to the facility if they are screened and follow the appropriate CDC guidelines for transmission-based precautions. See CMS [QSO-20-14-NH](https://www.cdc.gov Long-Term Care/Policy-and-Operations/Prevent-the-Spread-of-Sickness/Transmission-Based-Precautions/) and [CDC guidance](https://www.cdc.gov Long-Term Care/Policy-and-Operations/Prevent-the-Spread-of-Sickness/Transmission-Based-Precautions/).

**How do nursing facilities get personal protective equipment (PPE)?**

**Answer:** Providers should work with their local health departments and emergency management if they need PPE:

- Public Health Region [https://www.dshs.state.tx.us/regions/default.shtm](https://www.dshs.state.tx.us/regions/default.shtm)
- Local Public Health Organizations [https://www.dshs.state.tx.us/regions/lhds.shtm](https://www.dshs.state.tx.us/regions/lhds.shtm)
- Texas Division of Emergency Management: [https://tdem.texas.gov/](https://tdem.texas.gov/)
Where do NF providers go for COVID-19 information?
Answer: Reliable sources of information include:

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services
- The Texas Department of State Health Services
- The Health and Human Services Commission