



**Coronavirus (COVID-19)  
Home and Community-based Services and Texas Home Living  
Weekly Frequently Asked Questions**

On March 13, 2020, Governor Greg Abbott declared a state of disaster for all counties in Texas due to the COVID-19 pandemic and directed state agencies to restrict visitation to protect those most vulnerable to this virus.

The Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) is committed to sharing pertinent COVID-19 information with all Home and Community-based Services (HCS) and Texas Home Living (TxHmL) program providers via this regularly updated Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) document.

With each update, information 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](mailto:PolicyRulesTraining@hhsc.state.tx.us).

March 16-31, 2020

**Can individuals eat meals together?**

Answer: As stated in [PL 20-22](#), HHSC recommends canceling communal dining, however HHSC is not prohibiting individuals in a three-person, four-person, or host home/companion care residence from dining together. HHSC recommends that if individuals dine together, staff members help ensure that the individuals practice social distancing at the dining table. HHSC also recommends that staff members plate the individuals' food and help ensure they do not share serving spoons, utensils, plates, cups, or other related items.

**Do local shelter-in-place orders prohibit an individual from leaving and returning to the home?**

Answer: Shelter-in-place orders issued by local governments may vary, but in many instances require individuals to stay home unless they need to take care of a medical-related issue, go to the grocery store, or exercise outdoors while practicing social distancing. Many also require non-essential businesses to close. They do not prevent persons from returning to their residence. Program providers will need to comply with the restrictions and orders issued by their local government. Departures that are not health related are strongly discouraged, and HHSC

recommends that if an individual chooses to temporarily leave a three-person, four-person, or host home/companion care residence, the individual be allowed to return to the residence. If an individual leaves a residence temporarily for any reason, the individual must be screened upon return. If the individual meets *any* of the screening criteria described on page 2 of [PL 20-22](#), HHSC recommends that the program provider isolate that individual in one area of the residence to protect other individuals in the residence.

**Can providers tell people not to return for a period of time after vacation, home visit, etc.?**

Answer: HHSC recommends that a program provider advise an individual of any local social distancing requirements, public gathering restrictions, or shelter-in-place orders. Departures that are not health related are strongly discouraged, and HHSC also recommends that if an individual chooses to temporarily leave a three-person or four-person residence or residence in which host home/companion care is provided, the individual be allowed to return to the residence. If an individual leaves a residence temporarily for any reason, the individual must be screened upon return. If the individual meets *any* of the screening criteria listed on page 2 of [PL 20-22](#), HHSC recommends that the program provider isolate that individual in one area of the residence to protect other individuals in the residence.

**What signage should be posted at the entrance of a home?**

Answer: HHSC's recommendations about signage at a three-person or four-person residence or a residence in which host home/companion care is provided are addressed on page 3 of [PL 20-22](#).

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

Answer: Three-person, four-person or host home/companion care homes should not require screening of emergency services personnel in the event of an emergency.

**Who is expected to screen PAS/HAB staff at an own home or family home?**

Answer: HHSC does not have requirements governing the screening of these staff before they enter an individual's own home or family home. HHSC recommends that the program provider assist the individual or the individual's family members in monitoring the health of CFC PAS/HAB service providers as much as possible.

**Are individuals required to continue receiving all services, or will there be exceptions for non-essential services?**

Answer: As stated in [PL-20-22](#), program providers are required to ensure that an individual's critical needs are met. HHSC is not prohibiting the provision of non-critical services to individuals; however, providers must comply with any social distancing requirements, public gathering restrictions, or shelter-in-place orders

issued by local governments. Providers can arrange for non-critical services to be delivered to an individual through a method other than an in-person visit to a health care professional, such as by telephone, Skype etc.

**Can providers suspend routine doctor visits/therapy visits and/or use electronic visits instead?**

Answer: Program providers can reschedule appointments for non-critical services, including routine doctor and therapy visits, or arrange for those services to be delivered through a method other than an in-person visit, such as by telephone, Skype etc.

**Are individuals allowed to attend day hab if they want to attend?**

Answer: HHSC has issued IL [20-09](#), which explains changes to allow day habilitation to be provided in the home. HHSC recommends program providers protect individuals by refraining from attending day habilitation, and events in public where more than 10 people are gathered. HHSC is not prohibiting the provision of non-critical services to individuals, which might include day habilitation. However, program providers must comply with any social distancing requirements, public gathering restrictions, or shelter-in-place orders issued by local governments.

**Can providers bill for in-home day habilitation for host home companion care? If so, when?**

Answer: HHSC has issued [IL 20-09](#), which explains changes to billing requirements for the provision of day habilitation in an individual's residence.

**I have staff who have called in sick and simply can no longer work due to child care issues. What do I do when there are not enough staff for coverage?**

Answer: As stated in [PL-20-22](#), program providers are required to staff homes and ensure that an individual's critical needs are met.

**We have quite a few service recipients working. The guidance calls for limiting visitors but does not speak to whether providers should try to keep people home from work. What do we do?**

Answer: HHSC recommends that a program provider advise an individual of any local social distancing requirements, public gathering restrictions, or shelter-in-place orders. Further, if an individual chooses to leave a three-person, four-person, or host home/companion care residence to work, HHSC recommends the individual be allowed to return to the residence but be screened upon the return. If the individual meets *any* of the screening criteria described on page 2 of [PL 20-22](#), HHSC recommends that the provider isolate the individual in one area of the residence to protect other individuals in the residence.

**How do HCS and TxHmL program providers get personal protective equipment (PPE)?**

Answer: Program providers can contact the following organizations to ask about obtaining PPE:

- State of Texas Assistance Request (STAR)  
[https://olympus.soc.texas.gov/files/docs/StarGuides/2020\\_STAR\\_SOC\\_Quick\\_Reference\\_Guide.pdf](https://olympus.soc.texas.gov/files/docs/StarGuides/2020_STAR_SOC_Quick_Reference_Guide.pdf)
- Public Health Region  
<https://www.dshs.state.tx.us/regions/default.shtm>
- Local Public Health Organizations  
<https://www.dshs.state.tx.us/regions/lhds.shtm>
- Texas Division of Emergency Management:  
<https://tdem.texas.gov/>
- Regional Advisory Councils  
<https://dshs.texas.gov/emstraumasystems/etrarac.shtm>

**Where do HCS and TxHmL program providers go for COVID-19 information?**

Answer: Reliable sources of information include:

- [The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
- [The Texas Department of State Health Services](#)
- [The Health and Human Services Commission](#)

**Who do I call if staff or individual tests positive for COVID-19?**

Answer: Contact the local health department, or the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) if there is no local health department. Additionally, program providers must also report this information to HHSC at: [waiversurvey.certification@hpsc.state.tx.us](mailto:waiversurvey.certification@hpsc.state.tx.us).