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Updated Nursing and Assisted Living Facility Guidance

Background

Since December of 2020, Wyoming’s COVID-19 metrics have been improving. These improvements include a continued reduction in the daily number of positive COVID-19 cases, a continued reduction in the number of COVID-19 hospitalizations statewide, a continued decline in the percent positivity rate of all COVID-19 test results, and a reduction in the number of COVID-19 outbreaks in long-term care facilities.

In addition, long-term care facility residents and staff in Wyoming have begun receiving COVID-19 vaccines. Soon, many residents and some staff will be two weeks out from their second dose, meaning those individuals are considered fully immunized.

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) revised their visitation guidance for nursing homes on March 10, 2021: <https://www.cms.gov/medicareprovider-enrollment-and-certificationsurvey/certificationgeninfopolicy-and-memos-states-and/nursing-home-visitation-covid-19-revised>.

In addition, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued new recommendations for individuals who have been fully immunized against COVID-19: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated-guidance.html>.

Because of the continued decrease in transmission levels, and to ensure consistency with federal guidelines and recommendations, the Wyoming Department of Health (WDH) has updated its COVID-19 recommendations for long-term care facilities – including nursing facilities and assisted living facilities. That guidance is provided below.

NEW Recommendations from the WDH

Visitation for all long-term care facilities

Long-term care facilities must follow the guidance for indoor, outdoor, and compassionate care visitation outlined in the CMS memorandum that was originally issued on September 17, 2020, and revised on March 10, 2021. Changes in the revised guidance include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Facilities should allow indoor visitation at all times and for all residents (regardless of vaccination status), except for a few circumstances when visitation should be limited due to a high risk of COVID-19 transmission (note: compassionate care visits should be permitted at all times). These scenarios include limiting indoor visitation for:
 - Unvaccinated residents, if the nursing home's COVID-19 county positivity rate is >10% and <70% of residents in the facility are fully vaccinated;
 - Residents with confirmed COVID-19 infection, whether vaccinated or unvaccinated until they have met the criteria to discontinue Transmission-Based Precautions: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/disposition-hospitalized-patients.html>; or
 - Residents in quarantine, whether vaccinated or unvaccinated, until they have met criteria for release from quarantine.
- During a COVID-19 outbreak in the facility, facilities may allow indoor visitation in unaffected areas/units according to CMS guidance. An area or unit is considered to be affected if a resident lived in that area or unit when diagnosed, even if that resident is later moved into a different area or unit.
- Fully vaccinated residents can choose to have close contact (including touch) with their visitor while wearing a well-fitting face mask and performing hand-hygiene before and after. Regardless, visitors should physically distance from other residents and staff in the facility.
- Compassionate care visits, and visits required under federal disability rights law, should be allowed at all times, regardless of a resident's vaccination status, the county's COVID-19 positivity rate, or an outbreak in the facility.

Healthcare Provider Quarantine Recommendations for all Long-Term Care Facilities

Fully vaccinated healthcare providers with close-contact exposures who are asymptomatic do not need to be restricted from work for 14 days following their exposure. Work restrictions for vaccinated healthcare providers with underlying immunocompromising conditions (e.g., organ transplantation, cancer treatment) which might impact the level of protection provided by the COVID-19 vaccines may still be considered.

Guidance for Fully Vaccinated Residents of Assisted Living Facilities

Fully vaccinated residents of assisted living facilities may follow the CDC's recommendations for individuals who have been fully immunized against COVID-19 as described below:

- Fully vaccinated residents can gather with other fully vaccinated residents without masks or physical distancing. This includes communal dining and other group activities.
- Fully vaccinated residents can have visits with fully vaccinated guests without masks or physical distancing. Visitors should still wear a mask and practice physical distancing when in common areas of the facility where they may encounter staff or other facility residents.
- In situations where fully vaccinated residents are visiting with unvaccinated guests, masking and physical distancing should be maintained, though the resident may choose to have close contact with their visitor while both individuals are masked.

WDH Recommendations that WILL NOT Change

- As outlined below, residents of nursing facilities and assisted living facilities may leave the facility and not require a 14-day observation/quarantine period upon return. The Department recommends the following to ensure appropriate safety for all residents and staff:
 - Residents leaving the facility should follow all public health orders in Wyoming, including not attending events or gatherings that would violate provisions of the orders (number of people in attendance and capacity, mask compliance, etc.). Facilities should educate residents leaving the facility on the public health orders and encourage residents to follow the orders. Current versions of all public health orders can be found here: <https://health.wyo.gov/publichealth/infectious-disease-epidemiology-unit/disease/novel-coronavirus/covid-19-orders-and-guidance/>.
 - While outside of the facility, fully vaccinated residents may gather with other fully vaccinated individuals without masks or physical distancing. However, in all other situations, physical distancing, hand hygiene, and mask use should be used to the greatest extent possible while residents are outside of the facility.
- Nursing facilities must continue to follow all CMS guidelines for COVID-19, including visitation guidelines and appropriate COVID-19 testing protocols.
- Per the current guidance from the CDC, long-term care facilities should continue to quarantine all residents who have had a known exposure to COVID-19.
- Per the current guidance from the CDC, long-term care facilities should continue to isolate residents who have tested positive for or who have symptoms of COVID-19.
- Continue to screen all residents and staff for symptoms of respiratory illness and ensure those residents suspected of having COVID-19 are screened by a healthcare provider and tested for the virus.
- Continue enhanced infection control practices, including proper hand wash techniques, increase in the availability and accessibility of hand-washing stations and alcohol-based rubs (ABHRs), re-enforcing strong hand hygiene practices and no-touch receptacles for disposal, and requiring staff and allowed visitors to perform hand hygiene upon entering the building. Staff should also regularly clean and disinfect the facility, paying special attention to high-touch areas and surfaces. Staff should use personal protective equipment (PPE) when appropriate, following CDC, CMS, and WDH guidance.
- Communal dining and activities may occur in nursing facilities and among unvaccinated residents of assisted living facilities if physical distancing of at least 6 feet between each person, with the exception of spouses or roommates, can be maintained. Fully vaccinated residents of assisted living facilities may gather with other fully vaccinated residents without masks or distancing, as described above. After a positive result within the facility,

communal dining and activities should be suspended in affected areas/units but can continue in unaffected areas/units as defined by CMS.

- Nursing facilities should conduct testing of staff and outbreak testing of all residents and staff according to the Interim Final Rule CMS-3401-IFC, dated August 26, 2020 (<https://www.cms.gov/files/document/qso-20-38-nh.pdf>). Assisted living facilities may choose to either follow the CMS testing guidance for nursing facilities or continue to test 20% of residents and staff every two weeks as recommended in previous WDH guidance.
- Follow the testing and infection control recommendations of WDH when a case of COVID-19 is detected among a resident or staff member.
- Long-term care facilities may allow students to perform clinical rotations in the facility. Students should be trained in proper personal protective equipment (PPE) usage and educated on the risks of COVID-19 in the population they are serving and should wear all proper PPE for their roles and tasks while in the facility. Students should participate in staff symptom screening protocols. Students should be tested as staff members during both routine testing and outbreak testing.
- Barbering and cosmetology services may be provided to residents under the following conditions:
 - The barber or cosmetologist must be screened for symptoms of COVID-19 or exposure to an individual with COVID-19 within the last 14 days prior to providing services. Any individual with symptoms or exposure within the last 14 days must not be allowed to provide service. For guidance on COVID-19 symptom screening, please see Department of Health guidance at: https://health.wyo.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/WDH-Guidance-for-Employee-Screening_COVID-19_6.15.2020.pdf.
 - Facilities should include the barber or cosmetologist in staff testing protocols if the barber or cosmetologist is in the facility regularly (for example, at least once a week).
 - The residents must wear a face mask at all times while receiving service, unless medically contraindicated.
 - The barber or cosmetologist must wear a face mask while providing service or while within 6 feet of other individuals; eye protection such as a face shield or goggles is also recommended.
 - Equipment and surfaces must be cleaned and sanitized between each resident.
 - The barber or cosmetologist must perform hand hygiene before and after contact with each resident, and residents must perform hand hygiene prior to and after receiving services.
 - The barber or cosmetologist may only be allowed in locations within the facility where they are providing services.
 - Services should be performed in areas that are well-ventilated.

The WDH will continuously re-evaluate these recommendations and update guidance as necessary based on current conditions of the COVID-19 outbreak in Wyoming.

More information about COVID-19 can be found at:

- <https://health.wyo.gov/>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/long-term-care.html>
- <https://www.cms.gov/>