



Department of Health

KATHY HOCHUL
Governor

MARY T. BASSETT, M.D., M.P.H.
Acting Commissioner

KRISTIN M. PROUD
Acting Executive Deputy Commissioner

January 18, 2022

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update on Visitation and Testing

Dear Resident / Family Member:

This letter is to provide you with an update on the status of the Veterans Home's efforts to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. The safety and wellbeing of all residents is our top priority. We continue to work with the Department of Health and other agencies such as the CDC, CMS and Local County Department of Health on keeping the virus out of the facility.

At the current time the seven day community transmission rate is 16.6% which, although appears high shows a downward trend. As far as the facility, we have COVID-positive staff and residents in house. The facility is in outbreak testing at the current time, and we have 9 (nine) staff out on quarantine. We continue to test staff twice weekly and quarantine as per DOH regulation to ensure that residents are kept safe. As you know as well, all staff and most residents have been fully vaccinated, and most all of those who are eligible have received their booster shots. We continue to work with residents and staff to ensure all are boosted.

Please note that as per CDC, CMS and DOH regulation, **Visitation is open to all at all times**. Please give the facility advance notice if you plan to visit before 10am and after 9pm.

We are making available on the website the DOH Health Advisory of January 12, 2022 on visitation. We provide a summary below. The Advisory requires:

1. Visitors to have "received a negative SARS-COV-2 test result **one day** prior to visitation" by Antigen test. This means for example that a test for a Sunday visit should be conducted no earlier than the Saturday prior to the visit.
2. Visitors to have "received a negative SARS-COV-2 test result **two days** prior to visitation" by PCR test. Again, this means for example that a test for a Sunday visit should be conducted no earlier than the Friday prior to the visit.
3. For visitors who visit every day, "testing is required as often as feasible, at a minimum, every third day at day 1, day 4 and day 7"
4. Compassionate Caregiving visits who meet the meaning of Public Health Law 2801-h who are visiting in anticipation of the end of life of a resident or in the instance of a significant mental, physical, or social decline or crisis of a resident does not have to meet the testing requirements. They will be provided the necessary PPEs to visit the resident.

The facility is in receipt of Antigen Rapid Tests provided by the Department of Health. We will provide testing for those visitors who do not have SARS-COV-2 test results. Testing will be provided Monday through Sunday between the hours of **10:00am through 4:00pm**. The tests are only for the purpose of visiting your loved one. The facility will not provide documentation of this test to you. Please note as well that if you visit outside of these hours, you must be prepared to provide a copy of your SARS COV-2 test results obtained by Antigen or PCR test.

As always, thank you for your patience and understanding. Please contact your Social Worker if you have any questions or for further assistance.

Very respectfully yours,

Neville Goldson

Neville Goldson, CEO/ Administrator
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Date: January 12, 2022

To: Nursing Home Administrators, Directors of Nursing, Infection Preventionists and Medical Directors

Health Advisory: Nursing Home Staff and Visitation Requirements

Please distribute immediately to:

Operators, Nursing Home Administrators, Directors of Nursing, Infection Preventionists and Medical Directors

Due to the current Omicron COVID-19 outbreak throughout the State of New York, the New York State Department of Health is issuing this Health Advisory under 10 NYCRR §415.19 to implement the following requirements for staff and testing protocols for all visitors entering a nursing home in New York State during the duration of the Omicron outbreak:

- All nursing homes must continue to require personnel to be up to date on their COVID-19 vaccinations, as required by the Department's Prevention of COVID-19 Transmission by Covered Entities Emergency Regulation.
- All staff must be masked at all times, regardless of vaccination or booster status, and should consider wearing N95 respirators, especially in facilities where residents are unable to consistently wear face masks.
- The core principles of infection control and prevention should be adhered to at all times.
- Please refer to the January 4, 2022 Dear Administrator Letter for additional Department of Health recommendations. [DAL NH 21-30 Nursing Home COVID 19 Outbreak Recommendations](#)

Mask, Personal Protective Equipment, and Physical Distancing Requirements for Visitors:

All visitors must:

- Wear a well-fitting non-surgical paper mask or a mask of higher quality (i.e., surgical mask, KN95 or N95) at all times during any visitation at the facility. If the visitor wishes, a cloth mask may be placed over the paper mask. The masks must cover both the nose and the mouth; and
- Physically distance from facility personnel and other patients/residents/visitors that are not directly associated with the specific resident(s) being visited by that individual.

Testing for Visitors:

In addition, all nursing homes licensed and regulated by the New York State Department of Health must verify that visitors have received a negative SARS-CoV-2 test result **one day prior to visitation for antigen tests and two days prior to visitation for NAAT (e.g. PCR) tests. All visitors may use either NAAT testing or antigen testing.** This means, for example, that a test for a Sunday visit should be conducted no earlier than Saturday if it's an antigen test or Friday if it's a PCR test. Any PCR or antigen test used must either have Emergency Use Authorization by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration or be operating per the Laboratory Developed Test requirements by the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

Facilities can offer to conduct onsite testing of visitors, if practical. Facilities must have policies and procedures in place to review and report results of SARS-CoV-2. Records of SARS-CoV-2 tests must be made available, upon request to the local health department (LHD) and the New York State Department of Health. For visitors who visit for multiple days, including a visitor who comes every day, proof of negative testing is required as often as feasible, at a minimum every third day (meaning at a minimum testing is required on day one, day 4, day 7, and so on).

New York State shipped iHealth OTC COVID-19 Antigen Rapid Tests to every nursing home in the week of January 3, 2022, with shipments arriving by January 10, 2022. A nursing home should provide a visitor with an iHealth OTC COVID-19 Antigen Rapid Test if he/she does not have other valid proof of a negative test conducted in the required timeframe, and the visitor should test him/herself at the facility. The results of self-testing for visitors will not need to be reported either to ECLRS or to HERDS.

Exemptions:

The following are exempt from the testing requirements of this Advisory:

As stated in previous Department and CMS guidance at 42 CFR § 483.10(f)(4)(i)(C) requires that a Medicare and Medicaid-certified nursing home provide representatives of the Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman with immediate access to any resident. If an ombudsman is planning to visit a resident who is on transmission-based precautions or in quarantine, or an unvaccinated resident in a nursing home in a county where the level of community transmission is substantial or high in the past 7 days, the resident and ombudsman should be made aware of the potential risk of visiting, and the visit should take place in the resident's room.

Representatives of the Office of the Ombudsman should adhere to the core principles of COVID-19 infection prevention as described above.

Compassionate caregiving visitors, within the meaning of Public Health Law §2801-h, who are visiting in anticipation of the end of a resident's life or in the instance of a significant mental, physical, or social decline or crisis of a resident. In any case where such an exception is made, the visitor must wear any additional personal protective equipment (PPE) that facility personnel deem appropriate to the situation.

Emergency medical services (EMS) personnel are not subject to testing requirements.