

Frequently Asked Questions: Nursing Homes and COVID-19

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1. Will residents and family members be told if there is a positive COVID-19 case in the nursing home?

The federal government will soon require nursing homes to tell residents and families when the nursing home has a resident or staff member suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19. The nursing home is required to give updates as well to residents and families. Some nursing homes are already sharing COVID-19 information with residents and families through phone calls, newsletters, or the nursing home's website.

2. Can the Ombudsman confirm if there is a COVID-19 case in my nursing home?

The ombudsman can check the state's website to see if the nursing home reported COVID-19 cases and the day that information was reported to the state. Ombudsman cannot confirm the absence of COVID-19 in any nursing home, but can share if the ombudsman is aware of a potential or confirmed case based on the information made available to us.

3. Do nursing homes have to report COVID-19 cases to the state?

Each day, nursing homes must report the number of residents suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 to the state. This information is posted on the state's website and is updated daily. All long term care providers must report cases to the local health department as well.

4. Why don't all the staff wear masks and gowns?

The use of masks, gowns and gloves in a nursing home does not always mean there is an active COVID-19 case, as personal protection equipment (called PPE) is used to reduce the risk of spreading the COVID-19 virus. Nursing homes are to follow the guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on the use of PPE when it is available. We know some nursing homes are in need of more PPE.

5. What can a resident do to be in control of their care if they get the COVID-19 virus?

While many people with COVID-19 have no symptoms or only mild symptoms, some cases are more serious and may require the resident to make some health care choices.

Residents may want to create or update their advance directives to say if they want to go to the hospital or if they want ventilator care if they get the COVID-19 virus. Residents could decide to only receive comfort care at the nursing home and not to go the hospital.

During this very difficult time, it is important for health care providers and family members to understand and honor the resident's wishes in order to provide the level of care that the resident wants.

6. Can a resident leave the nursing home to live with a family member in the community?

Yes, if the resident can make that decision, it is up to the resident to decide if they want to move in with family. The resident should consider how their daily needs will be met and if the family's home is set up to meet their needs. The Governor's Executive Order 2020-50 protects the resident's right to return to the nursing home.

7. Will a resident be move within the nursing home if they get the COVID-19 virus?

A resident could be moved to another area of the nursing home if the resident or the resident's roommate tests positive or shows symptoms of COVID-19. This is done to provide the best care for residents with COVID-19 and help protect other residents from getting COVID-19.

8. Could a resident be moved to a different nursing home if they get the COVID-19 virus?

A resident could be moved to a Regional COVID-19 Hub if the nursing home does not have enough PPE or a unit to care for COVID-19 affected residents. The state is selecting a limited number of nursing homes as regional hubs. If a bed in a regional hub is not available, a resident may be moved to a hospital within the state. If there is no hospital bed available, a resident may be moved to an Alternate Care Facility. Residents have the right to return to their nursing home once recovered and a bed is open but it is unclear what the timeframe for return will be.

9. What is an Alternate Care Facility?

An Alternate Care Facility is a convention center or other location that is being used temporarily by the State to care for COVID-19 positive people who no longer need care in a hospital.

10. If a resident goes to the hospital for any reason, will they be able to return to their nursing home?

When a resident is ready to leave the hospital, the nursing home must take the resident back if the nursing home can meet the resident's care needs, has a COVID-19 unit with an open bed, and provides appropriate PPE to the staff. If not, a resident will go to a Regional COVID-19 Hub or Alternate Care Facility that has a bed and can meet the resident's care needs. A resident will be moved back to the original nursing home once a bed is open, but it is unclear what the timeframe for return will be.

11. How much notice will be given if a resident has to change rooms or go to another nursing home?

The nursing home will provide as much notice as possible to residents and their families, but during this challenging time it may be necessary to move residents without advance notice.

12. How will a resident be moved between nursing homes?

Proper medical transportation will be used based on the residents' medical status.

13. Can a family member or friend help when the resident has to move to another nursing home?

Not at this time. With the no-visitation policy still in effect, friends and family cannot enter a nursing home to visit with a resident or help with a move.

14. Can a family member or friend visit a resident through the window?

Families and friends can visit a resident at the resident's window as long as the window remains closed and the outside area is not being used by residents. It is important not to expose residents to the virus by allowing visitors into a resident area.

15. Can a resident at the end of life have visitors?

Yes, residents at end of life can have family members visit, but the visitor must be screened for COVID-19 and follow the nursing home's infection prevention protocols.

16. Why are residents being confined to their rooms if they don't have signs of COVID-19?

In an effort to control the spread of COVID-19, nursing homes are not allowed to hold group activities or serve meals in the dining room. Social distancing in the nursing home requires residents to stay in their rooms except for very limited medical care needs.

17. What will happen when the Medicaid redetermination is due while a resident is at a different nursing home or the hospital?

Medicaid cases will not be closed during the COVID-19 emergency. The state will continue Medicaid benefits until the first of the month following the end of the state of emergency.

18. Does a resident pay the monthly Patient Pay Amount to the new nursing home?

If a resident moves to another nursing home and already paid the patient pay amount to the original nursing home, the resident does not have to make a payment to the new nursing home until the first of the next month. A resident only pays the Patient Pay Amount (PPA) once a month. The ombudsman can help with questions or concerns about the PPA or if the residents is being asked to pay it twice in one month.

19. Who should people contact if they have concerns about infection control or a COVID-19 outbreak at a nursing home?

Serious concerns related to COVID-19, infection prevention, shortage of staff, abuse, or neglect can be reported to the Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs by calling 1-800-882-6006 or online at https://www.michigan.gov/lara/0,4601,7-154-89334_63294_72973---,00.html.

20. Where can people get current information about COVID-19?

The State of Michigan has a website for COVID-19 information and updates. You can visit the website at www.michigan.gov/coronavirus. It has guidance for providers, updates from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Executive Orders issued by Governor Whitmer, COVID-19 cases reported by nursing homes, and basic information for the general public.

The state also has a COVID-19 hotline (**888-535-6136**) open seven days a week from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. as well an email address, COVID19@michigan.gov, for people to submit their questions and concerns. You can also sign-up to get COVID-19 email updates from the State.

21. Why aren't local ombudsman visiting residents?

On March 13, the State Long Term Care Ombudsman made the difficult decision to suspend ombudsman visits to all licensed settings to avoid the risk of spreading the virus between residents and between facilities. Since that time, the federal government also banned visitors to nursing homes, including long term care ombudsmen.

22. Can people still contact the local ombudsman for help?

Yes, long term care ombudsmen can be contacted by phone or email to help residents and families with their concerns. Ombudsman must provide advocacy services to residents even with the visiting restrictions in place. Nursing home providers are to help residents contact the ombudsman program by making a phone available to residents. You can reach the local ombudsman can calling 866-485-9393. All services are free and confidential.