

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19): Applying Department of Health Testing Guidance for Long-Term Care Facilities' Residents and Healthcare Personnel to Community and Life Sharing Homes

ODP Announcement 20-068

AUDIENCE:

Providers licensed pursuant to 55 Pa.Code Chapters 6400 (Relating to Community Homes for Individuals with an Intellectual Disability) and 6500 (Relating to Life Sharing Homes).

PURPOSE:

This announcement provides guidance to Community and Life Sharing Home providers about how to apply COVID-19 testing guidance issued by the Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH).

DISCUSSION:

On June 1, 2020, PA DOH released [2020 – PAHAN -509-5-29-UPD UPDATE: Testing Guidance for COVID-19 in Long-term Care Facilities Residents and Healthcare Personnel.](#) This guidance is targeted to large congregate-care settings such as skilled nursing facilities and Intermediate Care Facilities for Individuals with an Intellectual Disability and does not specifically reference Community and Life Sharing Homes. However, some of the guidance provided can be applied to Community and Life Sharing Homes.

Note that testing conducted as below should be implemented in addition to existing infection prevention and control measures recommended by the DOH, including visitor restriction, cessation of communal dining and group activities, monitoring all individuals and staff for signs and symptoms of COVID-19, and universal masking as source control.

NEW CONFIRMED CASES – INDIVIDUALS

If an individual in a Community Home has a new confirmed case of COVID-19 infection, the provider should:

- Consider all individuals and staff who have resided or worked in the home in the 48 hours prior to the individual becoming symptomatic as “potentially exposed.” Additionally, any other persons with brief visits to the home should be considered potentially exposed if they were within 6 feet of others in the home for 15 minutes or more.
- If the individual was asymptomatic at the time they are confirmed with COVID-19:
 - Consider all individuals and staff who have been in the home where the confirmed COVID-19 individual was present beginning 2 days after the positive individual’s own exposure had occurred as “potentially exposed.”
 - If the individual’s date of exposure cannot be determined, consider individuals and staff who had contact with the individual confirmed with COVID-19 within 48 hours prior to the date of the positive test as “potentially exposed.”
- Test all individuals and staff that are considered potentially exposed, as above, for the presence of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19.
- The above individuals should be tested even if baseline testing has been conducted in the past.
- Do not retest any individuals or staff with a history of confirmed COVID-19.

Note: The provider should also test all individuals and staff who were potentially exposed if:

- An individual is *suspected* (i.e. not confirmed) to have COVID-19, and
- The individual’s test results will not be available for 2 or more days following the date of the test.

Occasionally, test results may return as **inconclusive or indeterminant result**. When this occurs, another test should be completed as soon as possible, and the individual should continue to be treated as potentially exposed.

NEW CONFIRMED CASES – STAFF

If any staff person who was present in any Community Home has a new confirmed case of COVID-19 infection, the provider should:

- Consider all individuals and staff who have been *in any home* where the staff person was present within 48 hours prior to the staff person becoming symptomatic as “potentially exposed.”
- If the staff person was asymptomatic at the time they are confirmed with COVID-19:
 - Consider all individuals and other staff who have been *in any home* where the confirmed COVID-19 staff person was present beginning 2 days after the positive staff person’s exposure had occurred as “potentially exposed.”
 - If the staff person’s date of exposure cannot be determined, consider individuals and staff who had contact with the staff person confirmed with COVID-19 within 48 hours prior to the date of the positive test as “potentially exposed.”
- Test all individuals and staff that are considered potentially exposed, as above, for the presence of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19.
- The above individuals should be tested even if baseline testing has been conducted in the past.
- Do not re-test any individuals or staff with a history of confirmed COVID-19.

Note: The provider should also test all individuals and staff who were potentially exposed if:

- A staff person is *suspected* (i.e. not confirmed) to have COVID-19, and
- The staff person’s test results will not be available for 2 or more days following the date of the test.

POST-TESTING ACTIONS TO PREVENT TRANSMISSION

Providers should take immediate action to prevent transmission when individuals have been potentially exposed or have been diagnosed with COVID-19. These steps include, but are not limited to:

- Quarantining potentially exposed/diagnosed individuals such that they have no contact with individuals who have not been exposed.
- Ensuring that staff who work in homes where potentially exposed/diagnosed individuals reside do not work in homes with individuals who have not been exposed.
 - If it is not possible to limit staff to only one home, the staff must change Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and perform hand hygiene between moving to different homes.
- Staff who work in homes where potentially exposed/diagnosed individuals reside must wear full PPE at all times.

REPEATED TESTING TO ENSURE TERMINATION OF TRANSMISSION

After testing all individuals and staff persons in response to a new case as discussed above, repeating the testing for an individual or staff person who tests negative for COVID-19 is recommended to ensure transmission has been terminated as follows:

- Immediately test any individual or staff who subsequently develops fever or symptoms consistent with COVID-19.
- Continue repeat testing of all previously negative individuals in the “potentially exposed” group once a week until the testing identifies no new cases of COVID-19 among individuals over at least 14 days since the most recent positive result.
 - If test capacity is limited, providers should direct repeat rounds of testing to individuals who leave and return to the home for medical care, visits with family, etc.
- Continue repeat testing of all previously negative staff persons in the “potentially exposed” group at least once a week until the testing identifies no new cases of COVID-19 among staff at least 14 days since the most recent positive result.
 - If testing capacity is limited, providers should direct repeat rounds of testing to staff who work at other homes where there are known or suspected COVID-19 cases. Note: It is recommended that staff who work

in homes where potentially exposed/diagnosed individuals reside do not work in homes with individuals who have not been exposed/diagnosed as a precautionary measure during the pandemic.