



pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH



pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 17, 2020

Wolf Administration Orders Further COVID-19 Protection for Long-Term Care Facility Staff

Harrisburg, PA – In response to concerns from frontline workers, the Secretary of Health today issued an [order](#) requiring long-term care facilities to take additional steps to protect their staff and residents from COVID-19.

“Across Pennsylvania, we have nurses and other frontline workers providing care to COVID-positive residents amidst the pandemic,” Secretary of Health Dr. Levine said. “Many long-term care facilities have been working diligently to protect their staff from this virus. We have heard also heard from nurses and staff from across the state, and this Order responds directly to their safety concerns. The Order requires that the necessary steps are in place to deliver a safer environment to continue providing high-quality care during these challenging times.”

The order requires nursing homes, personal care homes, assisted living residences and private intermediate care facilities to develop, implement and adhere to policies and procedures to procure and distribute personal protective equipment (PPE) to staff providing direct care to COVID-19 positive residents by Thursday, August 27.

The policies and procedures must, at a minimum, include the distribution of respirators, such as N95 masks, to staff providing direct patient care to residents who are or suspected of being COVID-19 positive and to staff assigned to provide direct patient care in COVID-19 units.

The respirators distributed by each facility must be National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) approved respirators, or if those are not available, respirators approved by the

Food and Drug Administration, including those approved through an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA).

The respirator must be given to staff before the beginning of the staff member's shift, and the respirator must be replaced as soon as practical if the facility is notified by a staff member that their mask has become soiled, damaged or otherwise ineffective.

"As we continue to face the COVID-19 pandemic, we must take lessons from the first six months and use this experience to plan and prepare for whatever arises in the weeks and months to come. This Order requires that facilities continue to be prepared for scenarios before they arise and to be able to act quickly and thoroughly," said DHS Sec. Teresa Miller. "Consistent and proper use of personal protective equipment prevent outbreaks and save lives, and facilities must set and adhere to policies that can mitigate risk and protect staff as they work tirelessly to address the needs of the residents they care for and serve."

If a resident, family member or staff member at a facility is concerned about the safety at a facility, an anonymous complaint can be filed with the Department of Health (DOH) or DHS.

If you have a complaint against a nursing home, you can contact DOH at 1-800-254-5164 or fill out this [online form](#). Concerns regarding personal care homes and assisted living residences can be sent to DHS at RA-pwarlheadquarters@pa.gov. Concerns regarding private intermediate care facilities can be sent to DHS at ra-customerservice@pa.gov.

Any long-term care facility staff who reports concerns about worker safety may not be retaliated against.

The Wolf Administration stresses the role Pennsylvanians play in helping to reduce the spread of COVID-19:

- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Cover any coughs or sneezes with your elbow, not your hands.
- Clean surfaces frequently.
- Stay home to avoid spreading COVID-19, especially if you are unwell.
- If you must go out for a life-sustaining reason, please wear a mask.

Updated Coronavirus Links: Press Releases, State Lab Photos, Graphics

- [Daily COVID-19 Report](#)
- [Press releases regarding coronavirus](#)
- [Latest information on the coronavirus](#)

- [Photos of the state's lab in Exton](#) (for download and use)
- [Coronavirus and preparedness graphics](#) (located at the bottom of the page)
- [Community preparedness and procedures materials](#)
- [Map with the number of COVID-19 cases](#)

All Pennsylvania residents are encouraged to sign up for AlertPA, a text notification system for health, weather, and other important alerts like COVID-19 updates from commonwealth agencies. Residents can sign up online at www.ready.pa.gov/BeInformed/Signup-For-Alerts.

MEDIA CONTACT: Nate Wardle, Health, ra-dhpressoffice@pa.gov
Erin James, DHS, ra-pwdhspressoffice@pa.gov

###