Interim Guidance for Long-Term Care: Admitting a Resident with COVID-19 from a Hospital

Background
Acute care facilities are experiencing heavy volumes and limited bed availability. There is a critical need to create capacity in acute care hospitals to serve those who need emergency and intensive care during this ongoing COVID-19 outbreak. One of the top priorities of Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) is to work with patients who no longer have a need for acute care in a hospital to transition to alternative settings. (DSHS Letter 3/20/20 - https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/ALTSA/rcs/documents/nh/020-012.pdf)

Accepting a Resident Who Was Diagnosed with COVID-19 from a Hospital
Long-term care facilities should admit residents with COVID-19 who are no longer acutely ill back to their long-term care residence. The decision to admit should be based on clinical care needs rather than the need for transmission-based precautions. Information on implementing appropriate transmission-based precautions is provided below.

Summary of Recommendations for COVID-19 Residents Returning from an Acute Care Hospital

Residents with COVID-19 still under transmission-based precautions or residents with suspected COVID-19
- Definition: ≤7 days since onset AND ≤72 hours since resolution of fever without antipyretics and symptoms improving.
- Place in a (non-airborne) isolation room with door closed, if possible.
  - Airborne isolation is only necessary for aerosol producing procedures, NOT for routine care.
  - Symptomatic residents should wear a facemask (if tolerated) and be separated from others (e.g., kept in their single occupancy room with the door closed, if possible).
  - If they leave the room (only when absolutely necessary), residents should wear a facemask (if tolerated) or use tissues to cover their mouth and nose.
  - If a separate isolation room is not available, the patient can be cohorted with other resident with confirmed COVID-19. Ideally, should be separated by at least 6 feet from the nearest patient (in all directions).
- Precautions: standard, contact, droplet
- Staff PPE: gown, gloves, facemask, and eye protection (i.e., goggles or face shield).
- If PPE supplies are limited, contact local health jurisdiction to submit a PPE request: https://www.doh.wa.gov/AboutUs/PublicHealthSystem/LocalHealthJurisdictions

COVID-19 cases post-release from transmission-based precautions
- The decision to discontinue transmission-based precautions should be made using a test-based strategy or a non-test-based strategy (i.e., time-since-illness-onset and time-since-recovery strategy).
- Non-test-based strategy: >7 days since onset AND >72 hours since symptoms resolved.
- Test-based strategy:
  - Resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications and
  - Improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath), and
  - Two negative COVID-19 nasopharyngeal swab specimens collected ≥24 hours apart (total of two negative specimens)
- Precautions: standard
Summary of Recommendations for Long-Term Care Staff

• Healthcare personnel (HCP) that are ill should stay home and notify their supervisor, especially if symptoms are consistent with COVID-19. If symptoms develop at work, HCP should don a mask and go home.
• Facilities should implement sick leave policies that are non-punitive, flexible, and consistent with public health policies that allow ill HCP to stay home.
• Facilities should ensure that staff affirm absence of COVID-19 symptoms (sore throat, cough, fever) upon arrival for each shift.

Summary of Recommendations for Visitors

• Offer alternative methods of visitation (Skype, Face Time, etc.), if available.
• Pursuant to Governor Inslee’s proclamations 20-16 and 20-17, visitors are prohibited in long-term care facilities during the COVID-19 outbreak.
• Actively assess all essential people entering the facility for a fever and respiratory symptoms. Do not allow ill people to enter the facility.

Please Read the Following for Direction on COVID-19 Prevention and Control

• Washington State Department of Health (DOH) Call to Action (attached):
• DOH Information for Long-Term Care Facilities:
  https://www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/NovelCoronavirusOutbreak2020/LongTermCareFacilities
• Centers for Disease Control & Prevention guidelines for long term care facilities at