

MEMORANDUM

November 12, 2020

To: Skilled Nursing Facilities
From: Monica Hutt, Commissioner
RE: Testing and Quarantine Updates

Please be advised that there are a few changes in access to regular staff testing opportunities and quarantine recommendations for individuals entering your facilities that we wanted to share with you.

Testing:

You are all well aware of the current surge in cases that Vermont is experiencing. Over time, we have found that regular, proactive staff testing has been an effective method to identifying risk and potential resident cases. The current arrangement we have with CIC/Broad Institute Labs to support proactive staff testing was developed to satisfy CMS requirements. Using the thresholds established by CMS, most or all of Vermont's facilities would currently only be required to test their staff monthly. We believe that more frequent staff testing would be prudent, and the State is willing to support that through the current contract, through the end of December.

If you refer to the ACCD's travel map, you will see that the dark blue color represents a County-level incidence of 800+ cases per million; other colors represent decreasing levels of incidence. Here is a link to that ACCD travel map for your review.

<https://accd.vermont.gov/covid-19/restart/cross-state-travel>

Based on current information about incidence rates, for all facilities in all areas, we are encouraging you to consider weekly testing and strongly recommend that you plan to test staff at least every other week.

We will ensure that the CIC/Broad Institute Labs are aware that more frequent testing may be occurring.

CIC/Broad Institute Labs have also let us know that current testing procedures do not require that a health care professional observes specimen collection; a trained observer can now fulfill that requirement.

Quarantine:

Based on the potential for impact of quarantine on the health and wellness of residents and the need to ensure a reasonable and timely transition from hospitals to SNF, we are allowing for

some very minor modifications to the current quarantine practices. You will note that neither of these modifications actually shorten the quarantine period but, rather, modify it to enable you to improve the experience of your residents and maximize your available space.

Modification 1: Residents on quarantine may be cohorted together to complete their 14 day quarantine, **on or after day 10**, if they both tested PCR negative for SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19) on or after day 7 of their quarantine.

Modification 2: Shift the testing schedule utilized for the Enhanced Testing Protocols upon admission from days 3,7,10, and 14, to days 3,7, and 12, allowing for a less burdensome testing regimen and a schedule more likely to result in prompt transition out of quarantine following day 14.

Please let us know if you have any questions about either of these changes.