



AGENCY OF HUMAN SERVICES  
DEPARTMENT OF DISABILITIES, AGING AND INDEPENDENT LIVING

Division of Licensing and Protection  
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To Report Adult Abuse: (800) 564-1612

March 17, 2020

Dear Licensed Nursing Homes, Residential Care and Assisted Living providers,

As you know, we are in a time of uncertainty with the current COVID-19 health emergency. What should not be uncertain at this time is residents being able to come back to their home when they do not have COVID-19 symptoms. The Vermont Department of Health noted that some facilities are developing policies that require a negative COVID-19 test in order to be readmitted to homes/facilities.

If enacted, this would force asymptomatic patients who were hospitalized for reasons unrelated to COVID-19 to remain hospitalized for testing that is not currently indicated or even in some cases available, reducing bed capacity for acutely ill patients. **These policies are not in line with current testing guidelines – tests ARE NOT AVAILABLE for this purpose.** Failing to allow a resident to return to the home/facility will put an unnecessary strain on the health care system that is already strained.

Per the Vermont Department of Health only those patients who are medically referred for testing due to symptoms consistent with COVID-19 will be tested. Healthcare workers with close contact to a confirmed COVID-19 case may also be tested in order to protect the healthcare workforce at this critical time.

The screening tool for long term care has been revised and redistributed to you, to eliminate the question regarding being in a facility where someone with COVID-19 is being cared for, which will eliminate residents having to answer YES to that question when returning from the hospital or other setting where people are being treated for the virus. The link to that tool is below. **Please eliminate any policy that requires negative tests or physician documentation of being COVID-19 negative immediately**, and do your part to allow the appropriate and expected movement of residents back into your facilities.

If one of your residents is experiencing symptoms consistent with COVID-19 (fever, cough, shortness of breath) please call a medical provider.

Of course, use robust infection control procedures upon any resident/staff entrance to the facility/home to reduce the chance of transmission. A link to CDC guidance for long term care facilities is also below.

Our general email inbox should be used for questions, and is:  
[surveyandcertification@vermont.gov](mailto:surveyandcertification@vermont.gov)

Sincerely,



Pamela M. Cota, RN, BS  
Licensing Chief

<https://www.healthvermont.gov/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/COVID19-Visitor-Screening-Tool-Congregate-Settings.pdf>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/healthcare-facilities/prevent-spread-in-long-term-care-facilities.html>