



Communicating about COVID-19 in Congregate Settings (Long-Term Care Facilities)

I. Background

SARS-CoV-2 is a novel coronavirus that causes coronavirus disease (abbreviated as COVID-19). Public health experts continue to learn about SARS-CoV-2, but based on current data and similar coronaviruses, spread from person-to-person happens most frequently among close contacts (those within about six feet) via respiratory droplets.

II. Purpose

This guidance addresses notification procedures by long-term care facilities to residents and residents' next of kin, guardians or emergency contacts when that resident, another resident or a staff member is diagnosed with COVID-19. This guidance also addresses notification to a resident's next of kin, guardian and emergency contact when that resident has died from COVID-19.

III. Process

Long-term care facilities must provide notification to staff, residents, residents' next of kin and guardians, and the Department of Public Health when persons working or residing in the long-term care facility are diagnosed with COVID-19. Such notification shall identify whether the diagnosed individual was a staff member or resident. The facility shall not, however, reveal personally identifying information about the diagnosed individual, including their name, except as necessary to notify the resident's next of kin or guardian and to ensure staff take sufficient safety precautions.

The following notifications must be provided within 24 hours after the facility's administration becomes aware of the diagnosis, unless sooner notification is required:

1. Verbal communication to a diagnosed resident's family, guardian, representative, conservator and any private or public agency responsible for a resident's care whenever such a resident becomes diagnosed with COVID-19. 77 Ill. Admin. Code 300.3210(o). Such notification shall be provided immediately upon the diagnosis. *Id.*
2. A written notification to each resident of the facility, as well as a verbal notification as needed, upon the diagnosis of another resident or staff member.

3. A written notification to the next of kin, guardian, or emergency contact of each resident upon the diagnosis of another resident or staff member.
4. Post a notification in a conspicuous place near the main entrance that announces that a resident or staff member has been diagnosed with COVID-19.
5. Provide a written notification to the Department of Public Health and the local health department upon the diagnosis of a resident or staff member, including notification that the long-term care facility is notifying staff, residents, and residents' next of kin as provided in this guidance. Such notification shall be provided immediately after learning of the diagnosis. 77 Ill. Admin. Code 300.1020(c).
6. When the long-term care facility's administration is notified that a person residing within the long term care facility has died from COVID-19, the administration must notify the next of kin, emergency contact or guardian of the resident who passed away within 24 hours. 77 Ill. Admin. Code 300.3210(n).

The health and safety of the long-term care community is of the highest priority. The facility shall take the necessary steps to reduce the risk of infection as there is evidence in Illinois of widespread community transmission of COVID-19. The facility shall follow the guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as well as the state and local health departments for best practices and protocols.

- CDC Guidance for Nursing Homes & Long-Term Care Facilities is available [here](#).
- DPH COVID-19 Control Measures for Long Term Care is available [here](#).

To prevent further spread of the disease, the facility shall proactively initiate and implement infection prevention strategies and practices including symptom screening of staff and residents, enhanced environmental cleaning and disinfection, and visitor screening and restriction. In addition, staff must wear masks at all times and closely monitor residents for any fever, symptoms, or health status changes.

After notifying the local health department and IDPH as required by the Communicable Disease Code, the long-term care facility must coordinate with the local and the state health departments to promptly identify and monitor individuals who have had recent contact with any COVID-19 positive individual(s) to prevent further spread within the facility and community.