

**COVID-19
NOTIFICATION TOOLKIT**

INTRODUCTION

CMS has new guidance requiring nursing homes to report COVID-19 related data to the CDC/NHSN data base weekly which is in addition to any state and local reporting currently being done. This requirement is effective May 17th with public reporting of facility numbers of COVID cases, both resident and staff. Effective May 8th, additional reporting requires that with any new case of COVID-19 or when 3 or more staff or residents are symptomatic within a 72-hour period, residents, representatives and families are notified by 5:00 pm the following day. This is in addition to the requirement of notifying representatives/families of a resident's change of condition. The notification process must be done in a way that protects the privacy of our staff and residents (HIPAA).

The HealthCap "Notification Toolkit" provides several sample documents for your consideration. There are two "initial" letter samples that may be used to notify residents, families and staff of the new CMS requirements. The third sample letter is considered an "update letter" and may be used to post the required data on your website, send via email or USPS, depending on your individual situation. Remember, only weekly updates are required if there are no new cases of COVID-19 in your center or if you have not had 3 residents/staff experiencing COVID-19 symptoms in a 72-hour period.

You decide. If you mail the initial letter that informs families/representatives of your intention to post data on your website you are free to do so. If you prefer another form of communication, that's great too! See what works for you, if you need more assistance please don't hesitate to contact your risk manager!

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This policy and procedure is not intended to replace the informed judgment of individual physicians, nurses or other clinicians nor is it intended as a statement of prevailing community standards or minimum standards of practice. It is a suggested method and technique for achieving optimal health care, not a minimum standard below which residents necessarily would be placed at risk.

NOTIFICATION LETTER SAMPLE #1

Date:

To our _____ Residents, Family and Friends:

We at _____ strive to provide high-quality personal and compassionate care to all of our residents. As you may know, certain residents of _____ have been diagnosed with COVID-19. To address the needs of these residents, we have decided to operate a designated COVID-19 unit. This allows the residents impacted by this virus to be in isolation where they can receive dedicated care.

_____ has taken, and will continue, precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19, including requiring all residents to remain in their rooms. Our staff members have been trained on our policies and have implemented them throughout our facility. Our staff is reviewing changing conditions, including the presence of elevated temperatures and respiratory illness in our community daily. We will continue to take efforts to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in compliance with CDC guidance.

While we have taken these steps to prepare our staff and facility, we need your help to minimize the facility's exposure to this virus. Please continue to observe appropriate infection control practices:

- Wash your hands;
- Cover your cough and sneezes;
- Maintain an appropriate social distance of at least six (6) feet;
- Do not shake hands or otherwise have physical contact with others;
- If you are ill or feeling under the weather, please let us know immediately. Also, please stay in your room and do not visit with others;

We understand that it is difficult not to be able to have visits with your loved ones. If you need assistance visiting with a loved one by phone, FaceTime, Skype, etc., let staff know and we will work to assist you. Protecting your health and wellbeing, and that of our staff, remain our highest priority. We appreciate your help and understanding during this unprecedented time and situation.

Going forward, we will provide general updates via our website with information related to COVID-19. You can locate our website at: _____. If you do not have access to our website, please contact us. Please know, however, that you will be contacted personally pursuant to other rules, policies or regulations if necessary, under the circumstances.

Sincerely,

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NOTIFICATION LETTER SAMPLE #2

Date:

Message from _____

Dear Staff, residents, representatives, families, friends, volunteers

We are committed to keeping our residents and staff safe as well as keeping everyone informed. New guidance from the federal government, CMS, the state department of health, and the Center of Disease Control is published on an almost daily basis. We review these materials and when necessary, update policies, in-service staff and ensure compliance. The only thing certain about COVID-19 is uncertainty. We are working closely with our local health department in addition to having our medical director involved in our management of this pandemic.

New guidance requires that we add reporting to the CDC weekly in addition to the state and local reporting we already do. This begins May 17th with public reporting of our facilities numbers of COVID cases. Additionally, it is required when there are new cases of COVID-19 or more than 3 staff or residents are symptomatic, that we notify residents, representatives and families. This is in addition to our already notifying representatives/families of a resident's change of condition. We will do this in a way to protect the privacy of our staff and residents.

Here is some of what we do know and what we are doing to protect our residents, staff and community:

We are working hard to keep COVID-19 out of our home. Residents are assessed every shift to identify infections early and manage any illness. Staff and anyone entering the facility is screened to ensure no one who is sick comes in or stays. While trying to conserve masks with the national shortage, we ensure all staff wear masks when in the facility and we encourage them to wear them in the community. We are rounding frequently, monitoring daily and educating as we go. We have dedicated rooms with dedicated supplies and staff for those residents who need to be isolated or quarantined for a period of time based on the CDC protocols. Our staff clean and disinfect frequently. Handwashing, social distancing and proper respiratory hygiene has become a habit by staff as well as our residents.

We understand the difficulty of not knowing. We understand that each of you have someone who is your priority and we are working hard during this difficult crisis to help keep them safe. Caring for our staff and residents is our priority. If you need more communication, let us know.

We will be posting updates on our website weekly, if you do not have internet access, let us know, we will give you a call or send a note. We want you to hear the facts from us first.

Stay well, stay safe, stay tuned

In this together,

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POSTING LETTER SAMPLE

Resident, Family, Representative Communication¹

Date: _____ Cumulative # of Residents/Staff COVID+ as of today: _____

Reason for notification:

- New COVID+ resident or staff
- 3 or more residents or staff with new respiratory symptoms within 72 hours of one another
- Weekly notice

Mitigation strategies: We will continue to update policies, procedures and educate staff per CDC guidelines. We have a dedicated isolation unit for residents who show symptoms of COVID-19 or those that are admitted with or test positive for COVID-19. At this time, we have adequate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). We will continue to conduct rounds to assure PPE is used properly and we will continue to follow the “No Visitor” Executive Order guidelines. We will also continue to monitor anyone who enters the facility for known signs and symptoms of the COVID 19 virus and will not allow anyone with symptoms to enter the facility.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me at: _____

Electronic Signature

Administrator

¹ Per CMS guidelines, our facility is required to notify residents, families and resident representatives of the presence of new COVID + cases in our facility and/or when 3 or more staff/residents develop new respiratory symptoms within 72 hours of one another no later than 5pm the following day. Additionally, we are required to provide a weekly update of facility activities related to COVID including mitigation strategies.

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