

Reopening Nursing Homes – COVID-19 Pandemic

General Guidance

On May 18, 2020, CMS published guidance for State and Local Officials to assist them in determining the level of mitigation for their Nursing homes to prevent the transmission of COVID-19. The States may implement the recommendations by having all facilities go through each phase at the same time or in a certain region or as individual homes. The phases for nursing homes should lag behind the general community's reopening by 14 days. Most of the criteria for re-opening is for restricting visitors and is focused on testing.

Factors to assist in making informed decisions for reopening and relaxing restrictions in nursing homes should include:

- Case status in the local community
- Case status in the facility
 - Absence of any new nursing home onset.
 - If a resident contracts COVID-19 within the facility without a prior hospitalization within the last 14 days, the facility should go back to the highest level of mitigation and start the phases over.
- Adequate staffing
 - Not under a contingency staffing plan.
- Access to adequate testing
 - Has testing plan
 - Capacity for residents' baseline and re-testing weekly as needed
 - Capacity for staff baseline and re-testing weekly as needed
 - Written daily screening protocols
 - Arrangement with lab to process tests within 48 hours
 - Procedure to address residents and staff who decline or are unable to be tested.
- Universal source control
 - Face coverings/facemasks
 - Social distancing
 - Hand hygiene
- Access to adequate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for staff
 - Contingency capacity strategy allowed.
- Local hospital capacity
 - Can accept transfers from nursing home.

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Additional Recommendations:

- Nursing homes do not begin to relax restrictions until the community satisfies gating criteria and enters phase 2 of Opening Up America Again.
- Nursing homes should spend a minimum of 14 days in each phase, with no new COVID-19 cases prior to moving to next phase.
- Any new COVID-19 cases in the facility in any phase will result in the facility going back to the highest level of mitigation and start the phases over.
- States may have facilities wait longer before relaxing restrictions if the facility had a significant outbreak, a history of infection control noncompliance, difficulty maintaining staffing levels or any other situation that may warrant additional oversight prior to relaxing restrictions.

References:

Nursing Home Reopening Recommendations for State and Local Officials; May 18, 2020;
<https://www.cms.gov/files/document/qso-20-30-nh.pdf>

Nursing Home Reopening Recommendations Frequently Asked Questions; May 18, 2020;
<https://www.cms.gov/files/document/covid-nursing-home-reopening-recommendation-faqs.pdf>

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