



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

March 17, 2020

Dear Provider:

The Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS), Division of Licensing Programs, is closely monitoring the COVID-19 pandemic and all guidance being distributed to healthcare facilities at the federal and state level. The American Health Care Association (AHCA) and National Center for Assisted Living (NCAL) have developed guidance and resources to help protect the health, safety, and welfare of residents in assisted living facilities. Although this guidance does not include Adult Day Care Centers (ADCC), we are encouraging ADCCs to follow the same recommendations given to assisted living facilities, as these centers care for highly susceptible populations as well.

VDSS has reviewed the following guidance from the CDC in conjunction with AHCA/NCAL, and we **strongly encourage** the following:

- Immediately restrict **all** visitors, volunteers and non-essential healthcare personnel (e.g., barbers) except for certain compassionate care situations, such as end-of-life.
- Notify potential visitors to defer visitation until further notice (through signage, calls, letters, etc.).
- Handle visits for end-of-life situations on a case-by-case basis, including screening of visitors, use of personal protective equipment (PPE) and hand hygiene by visitors, and limited access to the facility (resident's room or location designated by the facility).
- Cancel all group activities and communal dining.
- Implement active screening of residents and healthcare personnel for respiratory symptoms including actively checking temperatures for fever (all healthcare personnel at beginning of shift and residents at least daily).
 - Document absence of symptoms
 - Those with symptoms of a respiratory infection (fever, cough, shortness of breath, or sore throat), other than residents, should not be permitted to enter the facility at any time (even in end-of-life situations).
- Screen and monitor residents when visitors, staff, or others report respiratory symptoms within 14 days of interacting with the residents.
- Identify staff that work at multiple facilities and actively screen and restrict them appropriately.

- Enforce sick leave policies for ill healthcare personnel that are non-punitive, flexible, and consistent with public health policies, allowing ill healthcare personnel to stay home.
- Pay particularly close attention to any orders issued by Governor Northam or other public health officials in the coming days, weeks, and possibly months.

This new guidance means facilities need to explore mechanisms to allow family members, ombudsmen, resident representatives, and others to communicate with residents.

Additional recommendations include:

- Having all staff and visitors enter and exit through one main entrance, allowing for proper screening of each staff member, visitor, and contracted healthcare worker.
- Reducing group activities and communal dining.

Below is a link that provides significant information for assisted living facilities, including a COVID-19 screening tool kit, information on Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), outbreak reporting, local health district locators, training materials for staff, and a sample notice to families to restrict visitors.

<https://www.vhca.org/covid-19-resources/>

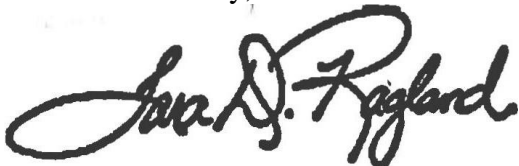
AHCA/NCAL has also created video messages directed towards family members/visitors to stress the importance of social distancing for the protection of those in care in assisted living. Facilities are encouraged to distribute this video to family members using the link below:

[Message for Families and Friends](#)

It is imperative that you notify your local Virginia Department of Health and your VDSS Licensing Inspector immediately if there is confirmation of COVID-19 in your facility. Please follow guidance from VDH and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) for all subsequent actions and precautions.

Thank you for your efforts and diligence to protect those in your care during these unprecedented times.

Sincerely,



Tara D. Ragland, Director
Division of Licensing Programs