



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

DATE: April 17, 2020

TO: Assisted Living Facility Providers

FROM: Tara D. Ragland, Director
Division of Licensing Programs

RE: Updated COVID-19 Guidance and FAQs

The Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS), Division of Licensing Programs (DOLP), continues to closely monitor the COVID-19 pandemic and all guidance being distributed to healthcare facilities at the federal and state level. All links to the information discussed in this memo are provided for you below.

This week, VDSS Commissioner Duke Storen, in accordance with Executive Orders issued by the Governor during the COVID-19 Pandemic, authorized temporary regulatory and operational flexibility for the DOLP. These leniencies for requirements that are burdensome to comply with during this pandemic will remain in effect through the end of the COVID-19 state of emergency.

VDSS is working in conjunction with Virginia Department of Health (VDH) to gain a better understanding of your current personal protective equipment (PPE) inventory status and facility capacity. We provided this information to you earlier this week, however if you did not receive the email, you can [find the survey here](#). Please complete your survey by Friday, April 24, 2020.

VDSS DOLP has developed Frequently Asked Questions regarding assisted living facilities. Over the past few weeks, we have tried to capture the questions and answers to the information facilities are seeking the most. We have also provided relevant links to the most up-to-date information and guidance regarding the COVID-19 pandemic.

On Friday, April 10, 2020, Gov. Ralph Northam announced a new task force to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in our long-term care facilities. Dr. Laurie Forlano, Deputy Commissioner for Public Health at the Virginia Department of Health, will lead the task force. This team is convening to develop strategies and implement systems to help long-term care facilities in outbreak responses. As a member of this task force, I am dedicated to ensuring assisted living facilities throughout the Commonwealth are well represented.

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently released new recommendations to state and local governments and long-term care facilities to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Please review the attached guidance as “best practices” for assisted living facilities in the Commonwealth.

The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) has recently released guidance on several issues, specifically outbreak reporting requirements for facilities, optimization strategies for personal protective equipment, and frequently asked questions regarding COVID-19 in facilities. I have included this information, along with guidance from the American Health Care Association (AHCA) and National Center for Assisted Living (NCAL) regarding collaboration with hospice services. Please review this very important information and share it with your staff.

I would like to reiterate how incredibly important it is for administrators and their teams to report all confirmed COVID-19 cases to VDH and their VDSS inspector, as soon as they learn of a positive case in their facility. This allows facilities to get [local health district](#) and epidemiological assistance in obtaining any additional testing and resources that are necessary, based on their assessment and guidelines set by CDC and VDH.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your licensing inspector for assistance. Thank you for the ongoing efforts you and your staff are making to provide quality care to residents during this unprecedented healthcare crisis.

Attachments:

State of Emergency Suspension of DSS Licensing Assisted Living Facilities (ALF) Regulation Requirements

https://www.dss.virginia.gov/files/division/licensing/alf/intro_page/code_regulations/regulations/alf_leniency_list_04142020.pdf

COVID-19 Long-Term Care Facility Guidance April 2, 2020

<https://www.cms.gov/files/document/4220-covid-19-long-term-care-facility-guidance.pdf>

VDH Guidance on Outbreak Reporting Requirements for Facilities and Programs

<http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/epidemiology/epidemiology-fact-sheets/outbreak-reporting/?pdf=5743>

Optimization Strategies for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in Long-Term Care Facilities

<http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/content/uploads/sites/182/2020/04/PPE-shortage-in-LTCFs-final.pdf>

VDH Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) on COVID-19 in Long-term Care Facilities

http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/content/uploads/sites/182/2020/04/COVID-19_FAQ-LTCFs_03272020.pdf

Guidance on the Role of Hospice Services in LTC Facilities During COVID-19 Pandemic

https://www.ahcancal.org/facility_operations/disaster_planning/Documents/Hospice-Guidance.pdf