



**STATE OF WASHINGTON**  
**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES**  
*Aging and Long-Term Support Administration*  
*PO Box 45600, Olympia, Washington 98504-5600*

June 16, 2020

**AL TSA: NH #2020-041**  
**COVID 19: REOPENING OF WASHINGTON STATE**  
**AND RESIDENT VISITS TO THE COMMUNITY**

Dear Nursing Facility/Home Administrator:

As Washington State begins moving through the phased reopening under the “Safe Start Washington” plan, some counties have been approved to move into phase 2 and others will soon follow. A part of the phase 2 plan includes the reopening of professional services such as dental and medical services, as well as hair and nail salons. Restaurants will also be allowed to reopen with partial capacity. As we look to these businesses and services reopening, we recognize providers have many questions regarding resident visits to the community to partake in these services, or to work in these locations, and the infection control measures that should be taken when the resident returns home.

As Washington State increases the availability of services and citizens are able to enjoy more time in the community away from home, residents in long term care may also want to enjoy those same opportunities. Under resident rights laws and rules, residents are able to participate in activities away from the home if desired or needed. A recent update to the four phase approach for the re-opening of Washington also allows for those in “high risk populations”, such as long term care residents, to engage in activities that are deemed permissible at each phase of the plan (<https://www.governor.wa.gov/news-media/inslee-issues-safe-start-proclamation-county-approach-re-opening>). However, with residents leaving the home providers will want to be mindful of infection control and implement specific procedures to follow when a resident returns from an outing.

When a resident plans to leave the facility for a medical appointment, therapy appointment, an outing, or work in the community, the facility should consider implementing the following infection control procedures:

- Assist the resident with acquiring any items needed to follow proper infection prevention practices, such as a mask and hand sanitizer;
- Inform the resident about potential risks when going into the community, including the increased risk of exposure to COVID 19 and the increased risk of introducing COVID 19 to the facility upon return;
- If someone is escorting the resident into the community, request they pick the resident up at the front door or curb;
- Inform the person escorting the resident into the community about the potential risks, including the increased risk of exposure to COVID 19 for the resident as well as the increased risk of introducing COVID 19 to the facility upon return;
- Request the person joining the resident in the community to wear a mask at all times while with the resident;
- Request the resident follow universal masking while in the community;
- Request the resident adhere to social distancing practices while in the community;

- Request the resident follow good hand hygiene procedures in the community, including frequent use of alcohol based hand sanitizer when soap and water is not available;
- With resident permission, keep a log of resident activities in the community to allow for contact tracing purposes if any community outbreaks occur in businesses or places the resident visited;
- Continue to conduct daily symptom screenings with resident upon their return to the facility;
- Request the resident practice social distancing when out of their room in the facility upon return from the outing;
- Request the resident follow universal masking when outside of their room upon return from the outing;
- If a facility is able, cohorting of residents who come and go from the facility would be recommended.

Contact with the local health jurisdiction (LHJ) regarding any specific recommendations, or for information regarding virus activity in the local community can also help a facility determine any other procedures that they may need to add to the list above. A list of LHJs can be found here: <https://www.doh.wa.gov/AboutUs/PublicHealthSystem/LocalHealthJurisdictions>

To find out more about the phased opening of Washington State and to determine which phase your community may be in, please visit the following websites:

Phase Chart: <https://coronavirus.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2020-05/PhasedReopeningChart.pdf>

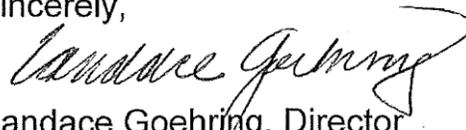
Phase 2 Map: <https://coronavirus.wa.gov/what-you-need-know/covid-19-county-variance-application-process>

To find out more information about the governors "Safe Start Washington" plan, please visit: <https://www.governor.wa.gov/sites/default/files/SafeStartPhasedReopening.pdf>

Soon, a phased reopening document will be released with additional recommendations and requirements for LTC facilities regarding visitors and other activities being resumed in facilities. Please continue to monitor the NH GovDelivery messaging for release of this information.

Facilities should continue to practice all infection control measures they have implemented. As always, thank you for your continued commitment to resident health and safety. If you have any questions about this letter, please contact Lisa Herke, Nursing Home Program Policy Unit Manager, at (509) 209-3088 or [lisa.herke@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:lisa.herke@dshs.wa.gov).

Sincerely,



Candace Goehring, Director  
Residential Care Services

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