

May 17, 2021

Dear Long-Term Care Provider,

On May 17, 2021, DPH released an updated Administrative Order for Long-Term Care Facilities to encourage a return to conventional PPE use, reflect updated guidance from CDC regarding interactions between vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals, and include content from recent CMS memos on nursing home visitation.

An additional update is that CMS published an interim final rule on May 11, 2021 (<https://www.cms.gov/files/document/qso-21-19-nh.pdf>) requiring nursing homes to report in NHSN resident and staff vaccination and resident therapeutics for treatment of COVID-19 beginning May 21, 2021.

The following are priority highlights when considering reopening (with Administrative Order page number reference):

- Fully vaccinated (i.e., ≥ 2 weeks following receipt of second dose in a 2-dose series or ≥ 2 weeks following receipt of one dose of a single-dose vaccine; herein referred to as “vaccinated” (See page 7 or 28)
- A screening protocol for all visitors and healthcare workers that includes . . . requesting vaccination status during visitor’s initial visit (visitors that do not provide a response should be treated as unvaccinated) (See page 2 of 28).
- Facility must have a written vaccination plan with key strategies to ensure all eligible residents, families and staff are educated, encouraged, and supported to become and maintain vaccination status. (See page 3 of 28)
- Fully vaccinated staff are excluded from routine testing. Staff testing during an outbreak or due to symptoms should occur regardless of vaccination status (See page 17 of 28).
- Vaccinated visitors with vaccinated resident family member may elect to not wear a mask or socially distance from their family member while alone with that family member in their single room or a designated visitation room. Visitors should wear source control and socially distance from staff and other residents outside of their family member(s) at all other times while in the facility (See page 5 of 28).
- All facilities need to move toward conventional use of NIOSH-approved N-95 respirator, which includes (See page 6 of 28):
 - a) Fit test all staff members who require respirator use per OSHA standards. Document ordering, training for fit tester, fit testing dates/times. (See also: https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/npptl/topics/respirators/disp_part/resresource3fittest.html)
 - b) Order NIOSH-approved N-95 masks in various sizes readily available from supplier. To resupply respirators, order N-95 masks for which staff have been fitted.
 - c) Although all facilities should be working toward conventional PPE use, those facilities working under contingency or crisis PPE capacity strategies may need to prioritize use of NIOSH-approved N-95 respirator masks (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/respirators-strategy/index.html#convcapstrategies>). Staff working in COVID-19 or Observation Units should wear full COVID-19 PPE (https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/COVID-19_PPE_illustrations-p.pdf).

- d) Fully document program to move to using NIOSH-approved N-95 respirators and timeline for completion.
- Resident trips outside the facility for non-medically necessary reasons are allowed in both phases (See page 13 of 28).
 - Vaccinated residents may eat in the same room without masks and social distancing. If any unvaccinated residents are in the dining hall or if the vaccination status of all participants cannot be determined, all participants should wear source control and practice social distancing (limited number of people at tables and spaced by at least 6 feet) (See page 14 of 28).
 - Vaccinated residents may participate in group activities without source control or social distancing. If any residents are not fully vaccinated or have unknown status, all residents should follow procedures for unvaccinated residents (See page 13 of 28).

Please refer to the complete **Administrative Order for Long-Term Care Facilities** at <https://dph.georgia.gov/administrative-orders> for full details.

DPH has a professional team of infection preventionists to support long-term care facilities in reopening, reviewing policies, and providing safe visitation practices. If you have any questions regarding infection control or your reopening practices, please contact the infection preventionist assigned to your district below.

| State Region/Districts | Resource | Contact Information |
|--|--|---|
| North (Rome, Dalton, Gainesville, Athens) Districts 1-1, 1-2, 2, 10 | Sue Bunnell and Mary Whitaker | Sue.Bunnell@dph.ga.gov (404-967-0582) Mary.Whitaker@dph.ga.gov (404-967-0578) |
| Atlanta Metro (Cobb-Douglas, Fulton, Clayton, Lawrenceville, DeKalb, LaGrange) Districts 3-1, 3-2, 3-3, 3-4, 3-5, 4 | Teresa Fox, Cyndra Bystrom, and Renee Miller | Teresa.Fox@dph.ga.gov (404-596-1910) Cyndra.Bystrom@dph.ga.gov Renee.Miller@dph.ga.gov (678- 357-4794) |
| Central (Dublin, Macon, Augusta) Districts 5-1, 5-2, 6 | Theresa Metro-Lewis and Karen Williams | Theresa.Metro-Lewis@dph.ga.gov (404-967-0589); Karen.Williams13@dph.ga.gov (404-596-1732) |
| Southeast (Valdosta, Albany) Districts 8-1, 8-2 | Connie Stanfill | Connie.Stanfill1@dph.ga.gov (404-596-1940) |
| Southwest (Columbus, Savannah, Waycross) Districts 7, 9-1, 9-2 | Regina Howard | Regina.Howard@dph.ga.gov (404 967-0574) |
| Backup/Nights/Weekends | Jeanne Negley and JoAnna Wagner | Jeanne.Negley@dph.ga.gov (404-657-2593); Joanna.Wagner@dph.ga.gov (404-430-6316) |

We greatly appreciate your efforts to keep residents safe and healthy in Georgia. If you have additional questions, please email us at hai@dph.ga.gov or call 404-657-2588 and ask for a member of the Healthcare-Associated Infections Team.

Sincerely,

The Georgia Healthcare Associated Infections/Antimicrobial Resistance Team
HAI@dph.ga.gov