



Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Public Health
Bureau of Health Care Safety and Quality
67 Forest Street, Marlborough, MA 01752

CHARLES D. BAKER
Governor

KARYN E. POLITO
Lieutenant Governor

MARYLOU SUDDERS
Secretary

MONICA BHAREL, MD, MPH
Commissioner

Tel: 617-624-6000
www.mass.gov/dph

Memorandum

TO: Nursing Home and Rest Home Administrators

FROM: Margret Cooke, Deputy Commissioner

SUBJECT: Allowing Non-Essential Personnel in Long-Term Care Facilities¹

DATE: April 1, 2021

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) continues to work with state, federal, and local partners on the outbreak of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), caused by the virus SARS-CoV-2, and we continue to appreciate the essential role you have in responding to this evolving situation. This updated memorandum replaces the July 30, 2020 memorandum.

Long-term care facilities may allow non-essential personnel to enter the facility, provided that the long-term care facility meets all of the following safety, care, and infection control measures:

- The long-term care facility has adequate supplies of personal protective equipment and essential cleaning and disinfection supplies to care for residents.
- The long-term care facility is not under a contingency staffing plan.
- The long-term care facility has implemented and is in compliance with the Commonwealth's Long-Term Care Surveillance Testing Strategy.
- The long-term care facility screens all non-essential personnel for fever or respiratory symptoms before they enter the facility. The long-term care facility must not permit any individuals with symptoms of COVID-19 infection (fever equal to or greater than 100.0 F, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, myalgia, chills or new onset of loss of taste or smell) to enter.
- Non-essential personnel must wear a face mask for the duration of their time in the facility and don any other appropriate personal protective equipment.
- Non-essential personnel are not permitted to enter spaces or rooms designated by the facility for caring for COVID-19 positive residents.

¹ This guidance applies to all Long-Term Care Facilities (Nursing Homes and Rest Homes) other than those that are operated by the state.

If volunteers are permitted in a long-term care facility, the following safety, care, and infection control measures should be implemented in addition to the measures described above:

- Volunteers must wear a face mask for the duration of their time in the facility.
- Volunteers must remain socially distanced (6 feet apart) from residents at all times; and
- Volunteers are permitted in common spaces within the facility and may be permitted in resident rooms, if the volunteer and the residents in the room are all fully vaccinated.

Non-essential personnel include, but are not limited to, the following individuals: barbers, hair stylists, volunteers, contractors and vendors performing maintenance or construction work within the facility, surveyors from accrediting organizations, and individuals working in facility gift shops.

When providing services in the long-term care facility, non-essential personnel must follow the same safety standards and checklists for any service they are providing outside the long-term care facility, including but not limited to, maintaining social distancing between residents, hygiene protocols, staffing and operations, and cleaning and disinfection. The guidance may be found here: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/reopening-massachusetts>.

Long-term care facilities are encouraged to perform rapid point of care testing of non-essential personnel using BinaxNOW tests. However, a facility shall not condition entering the facility on testing or a negative test result.

Long-term care facilities can also encourage non-essential personnel to become vaccinated when they have the opportunity. While vaccination can help prevent the spread of COVID-19, non-essential personnel should not be required to be tested or vaccinated (or show proof of such) as a condition of entrance into the long-term care facility.

The implementation of this guidance is contingent on Massachusetts meeting a range of public health metrics outlined at <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-response-reporting>. Ongoing performance related to these measures will inform future decisions.

DPH strongly encourages all long-term care facilities in Massachusetts to monitor the CMS and CDC website for up-to-date information and resources:

- CMS website: <https://www.cms.gov/About-CMS/Agency-Information/Emergency/EPRO/Current-Emergencies/Current-Emergencies-page>
- CDC website: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/healthcare-facilities/index.html>

Additionally, please visit DPH's website that provides up-to-date information on COVID-19 in Massachusetts: <https://www.mass.gov/2019coronavirus>.