

Interim Recommendations for Nursing Homes in Regions of Increased COVID-19 Activity For New London and Windham Counties – October 2, 2020

DPH is concerned about increased community spread of COVID-19 in New London County and other parts of Eastern Connecticut.

Recommendation (Windham) and Requirement (New London) for Increased Staff Testing Frequency

DPH is ***requiring*** for New London County: Test all staff (who have not tested positive in the past 90 days) on a weekly basis. This is to continue until further notice.

DPH is ***recommending*** for Windham County: Test all staff (who have not tested positive in the past 90 days) on a weekly basis. DPH will keep an eye on Windham County and communicate when elevated community transmission rates steadily decline.

Recommendation to Consider Incorporating a Policy for Visitor Testing

In regions of increased community transmission of SARS-CoV-2, long-term care facilities should consider the development of institutional policies which incorporate a testing strategy to maintain the ability to host safe visitation. Addition of a testing strategy for this limited application does not alter other aspects of established visitation guidance (such as screening of visitors for symptoms, temperature, and exposures).

Two options to consider for an indoor visitor testing policy:

1. Community-based testing option: Visitors may present a negative result from a test obtained within 72 hours prior to visitation. PCR screening is preferred for asymptomatic testing.
2. On-site testing option: Facilities may offer testing to visitors on-site using their antigen testing platform.

For either option, visitors are only eligible to use testing to access visitation if they have not been identified with increased *personal* risk of infection. Increased personal risk of infection includes prolonged close contact with a laboratory confirmed case of COVID-19 (whether or not the case is symptomatic), recommendation from a public health authority to quarantine following a suspect exposure, or recommendation to quarantine following travel to an area of high transmission as delineated in the State of Connecticut or Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) travel advisories. **Individuals exhibiting symptoms consistent with COVID-19 should not be permitted to visit even if a negative test result is presented.**

Community-based Testing Option

If using a community-based testing option, visitors should be advised to seek testing through their primary healthcare provider. Information on locating community-based testing can be found by calling 2-1-1 or visiting the following website: <https://portal.ct.gov/Coronavirus/Covid-19-Knowledge-Base/COVID-19-Testing>

On-site Testing Option

Facilities can choose to allow for on-site antigen testing of visitors. All antigen tests require a test order from a medical provider and should include patient counseling regarding the intended use of the test and the implications of test results. Medical providers in long-term care should consider whether they

may wish serve as the ordering provider for visitor testing. Additional information regarding antigen testing can be found in a recent provider memo at the top of our Healthcare Guidance Page here: <https://portal.ct.gov/DPH/HAI/COVID-19-Healthcare-Guidance>

If an on-site antigen test is positive, the visitor should be counseled regarding the result and the need to self-isolate at home. The result should be communicated to DPH in a timely manner to facilitate contact tracing.

If an on-site antigen test is negative, the visitor should be counseled that the result is considered a “presumptive negative” and this does not definitively rule out infection with SARS-CoV-2. Additionally, this negative test only reflects a moment in time, and will only allow for visitation on the date of test.

Control Measures During Visitation

The use of a testing strategy around visitation does not remove the need for other existing risk mitigation strategies including the need for universal face coverings, social distancing, symptom screening, and diligent hand hygiene.

Please adhere to the Core Principles of COVID-19 Infection Prevention in the CMS Memo for Nursing Home Visitation: <https://www.cms.gov/files/document/gso-20-39-nh.pdf>

If there are any questions regarding the above or further developments regarding to this situation, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Best,
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