

On May 11, 2023, the federal COVID-19 Public Health Emergency declaration ended. This memo summarizes how this change affects long-term care facilities in Vermont. While many COVID-19 recommendations will stay the same for Vermont facilities, this is an opportunity to further integrate COVID-19 procedures into ongoing public health practices.

## **(New) COVID-19 Community and Transmission Levels are now replaced by Hospital Admission Level.**

- Facilities are encouraged to use the statewide Hospital Level and the Vermont Department of Health's Weekly COVID-19 Surveillance Report when considering using universal masking or testing strategies.
- The Health Department will be monitoring hospitalizations and other indicators and may periodically make additional recommendations to facilities in Vermont, especially when other respiratory viruses are circulating.

## **(New) The “Long-Term Care Guidance for Operations During COVID-19 Health Emergency” document will not be updated and should no longer be used.**

- Facilities should incorporate COVID-19 guidance into their own infection prevention and control plans. [Health's COVID-19 Epidemiology Program](#) and the [Department of Aging and Independent Living's \(DAIL\) Strike Team](#) can assist with developing facility plans.

## **Reporting requirements for Vermont facilities, providers and labs have not changed.**

Nursing and health care facilities are still required to report COVID-19 cases to **both** of the following:

- Report all COVID-19 cases in your facility to the Health Department. This includes residents and staff who may have been in the facility while infected with COVID-19. This fulfills the statutory requirement to report any COVID-19 outbreaks. For more information, see 5.1 and 5.4 of the [Reportable and Communicable Disease Rule](#).
- Report any COVID-19 test results administered at a long-term care facility to the CDC's National Healthcare Safety Network (NHSN). This fulfills the requirement to report any COVID-19 laboratory results. For more information, see section 6 of the [Reportable and Communicable Disease Rule](#).

## **Testing recommendations have not changed.**

COVID-19 should not prevent admission or discharge, but receiving or discharging facilities should notify the other facility of a positive COVID-19 case.

- Test residents on admission if they have symptoms or are suspected to recently have had high-risk contact with someone with COVID-19.
- Facilities can test asymptomatic residents at their own discretion or based on Vermont's Hospitalization Level or other public health guidance.
- If there is a positive COVID-19 case in the facility, test any staff and residents who had close contact with the person with COVID-19. If close contacts cannot be identified, test all staff and residents in the group or unit of the person with COVID-19.

## Masking recommendations for infections, symptoms and exposures have not changed.

### For Individuals:

- Face masks are recommended for individuals with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 or compatible symptoms, and for close contacts for 10 days after being exposed to an infected person.
- Face masks may be worn as a personal preference and should be worn by health care providers or personnel at the request of a patient or resident.

### Facilities or Units:

- Masking is recommended for all staff and residents in the unit or area of the facility experiencing a COVID-19 or other outbreak until 14 days have passed with no new cases.
- Facilities should consider facility- or unit-wide masking in higher-risk areas, areas serving higher-risk residents and patients, and during periods of higher COVID-19 Hospitalization Levels or other respiratory virus transmission.
- Facilities should solicit input from stakeholders and consider a coordinated approach with other facilities and health care agencies in their area to determine practices that will be more broadly supported.

### During Visitation:

- Facilities are recommended to defer non-urgent visitation when visitors have confirmed or suspected COVID-19, had a known exposure, or are symptomatic.
- Consider requesting visitors to wear a mask based on increasing hospitalization levels or other public health guidance.
- Visitors should be encouraged to wear a mask while visiting a resident who has tested positive for COVID-19 or a unit or facility experiencing transmission.

### For Residents Leaving the Facility:

- Facilities should consider recommending masks for residents leaving the facility when the Hospitalization Level is high or at other times recommended by the Health Department.
- For residents at higher risk, or those who spend time in higher-risk units, facilities may consider recommending masks when Vermont's Hospitalization Level is medium or when other respiratory viruses are known to be circulating.

The Health Department continues to provide enhanced support to facilities to prevent and mitigate the spread of COVID-19. To contact the Health Department's Epidemiology Team call 802-863-7240 (option 2) or email [AHS.VDHEPICVID19Program@vermont.gov](mailto:AHS.VDHEPICVID19Program@vermont.gov).

For more information and resources, visit [HealthVermont.gov/COVID](https://HealthVermont.gov/COVID).