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## **COVID-19 GUIDANCE FOR HOME AND COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICE (HCBS) PROVIDERS**

This guidance is based on what is currently known about the transmission and severity of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) will update this guidance as needed and as additional information becomes available.

This document is intended to be a statewide guidance to providers of Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) in California.

### **Background**

COVID-19 is a respiratory illness caused by a novel virus that has been spreading worldwide. Community-acquired cases have been confirmed in California. The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) is monitoring COVID-19, conducting testing with local and federal partners, and providing guidance and resources to prevent, detect, and respond to the occurrence of COVID-19 cases in California. For more information, please visit the [CDPH Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) webpage](#).

DHCS is partnering with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), other state departments, as well as Medi-Cal managed care plans, health facilities, and providers across the state to prepare and protect Californians from COVID-19.

### **HCBS Recipients and COVID-19**

HCBS recipients are more likely to have pre-existing health conditions that put them at greater risk for COVID-19 infection and serious illness. Providers who care for HCBS recipients are also at greater risk for COVID-19 transmission because of their proximity to HCBS recipients.

DHCS therefore issues this guidance to: (1) protect vulnerable HCBS recipients, HCBS providers, and people who come into contact with HCBS recipients and providers; and (2) reduce community transmission of COVID-19.

### **DHCS Update for HCBS Waiver Programs**

DHCS is developing options under state and federal guidance to grant HCBS providers flexibility to administer 1915(c) waiver programs, including the Developmentally Disabled (DD) Waiver, Multipurpose Senior Services Program (MSSP) Waiver, HIV/AIDS Waiver, Home and Community Based Alternatives (HCBA) Waiver, and Assisted Living Waiver (ALW). This includes the option to delay or waive face-to-face visits and assessments, and to conduct telephonic or video conferencing (Skype/FaceTime) in place of in-person meetings. DHCS has issued similar options for Programs for All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) Organizations, and is developing options for Community-Based Adult Services (CBAS) and In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS).

### **CMS/CDC Guidance for In-Home Providers**

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid services (CMS) recently issued a memorandum titled [Guidance for Infection Control and Prevention Concerning Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) in Home Health Agencies \(HHAs\)](#). This guidance includes important information on how Home Health Agencies and in-home providers can protect patients in home care settings from the spread of COVID-19. This guidance includes guidelines for how providers should screen in-home patients for COVID-19, and what to do when providers suspect that a patient has been infected with COVID-19.

The guidance also includes advice on how to monitor or restrict home visits for health care staff. Home Health Agencies and Aides monitor the health status of every person (patients/residents/visitors/staff/etc.) in the homecare setting for signs or symptoms of COVID-19. HCBS Providers who are infected or experience signs and symptoms of the virus should not place themselves in situations where they may infect HCBS beneficiaries.

In addition, Home Health Agencies and in-home providers should monitor the [Centers for Disease and Control and Prevention \(CDC\) website](#) for important information and resources, and contact their local health department when needed. According to the CDC, prompt detection, triage and isolation of potentially infectious patients are essential to prevent unnecessary exposures among patients, healthcare personnel, and visitors.

### **Clinical Information**

#### ***Illness Severity***

The complete clinical picture regarding COVID-19 is not fully understood. Reported illnesses have involved symptoms that range from mild to severe, and some cases have resulted in death. Older people and people with certain underlying health conditions

including heart disease, lung disease, and diabetes appear to be at greater risk of serious illness.

***Who is at Higher Risk for Serious Illness from COVID-19?***

Evidence from China, where COVID-19 originated, suggests that the following groups of people are at greater risk of serious illness from COVID-19.

- Older adults
- Individuals with compromised immune systems
- Individuals who have serious chronic medical conditions like:
  - Heart disease
  - Diabetes
  - Lung disease

***What are the symptoms of COVID-19?***

Typically, human coronaviruses cause mild-to-moderate respiratory illness. Symptoms are very similar to the flu, including:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

COVID-19 can cause severe respiratory illness. Please see the [CDC website](#) for additional information on COVID-19 symptoms.

***How can people protect themselves?***

Every person should take action to minimize the risk of COVID-19 to themselves and others, especially those who are at higher risk of serious illness from COVID-19. These actions include:

- **Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing, or having been in a public place.**
- **Avoiding touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.**
- **Avoid close contact with people who are sick.**
- **Stay away from work, school, and other people if you become sick with a fever, cough, or respiratory symptoms.**
- **Following guidance from public health officials.**

***What should you do if you think you're sick or have symptoms?***

**Call ahead:** If you are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, have been in contact with a person with COVID-19, or recently traveled to countries that have community spread

of COVID-19, you should contact your health care provider or local public health department.

***Should I wear a mask?***

The California Department of Public Health, along with the CDC, does not recommend that healthy people wear masks at this time. However, masks are recommended to limit the spread of disease for people who are exhibiting a fever, cough, or respiratory symptoms.

***Plan:***

Develop or update your emergency operations plan.

- Identify a list of key contacts at your local and state health departments.
- Identify a list of healthcare facilities and alternative care sites where patients with respiratory illness can seek housing and receive appropriate care.
- Develop contingency plans in the event that your employees need to miss work due to illness, or because they need to care for a family member. These plans might include extending work shifts, cross-training current employees, or hiring temporary employees.

***Please Note:*** *This is a compilation of information from various sources, but is not all encompassing. Please consult with your local health department, and the [California Department of Public Health](#) for more information.*

**Links to State Departments Responding to COVID-19 for Program Specific Information**

[California Department of Health Care Services](#)

[California Department of Public Health](#)

[California Department of Aging](#)

[California Department of Social Services](#)

[California Department of Developmental Services](#)

[California Department of Rehabilitation](#)