



Department of Health

Mike DeWine, Governor
Jon Husted, Lt. Governor

Amy Acton, M.D., MPH, Director

March 21, 2020

Dear Ohio Long-Term Care Facility Administrators,

The Ohio Department of Health (“ODH”) has been made aware that some nursing homes are refusing to accept residents coming from hospitals or of residents who have been hospitalized and are being discharged. These residents have not been tested for COVID-19 as they did not show any signs or symptoms of COVID-19.

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) issued QSO-20-14-NH on March 13, 2020, which clearly states a nursing home should continue to admit residents who it would normally admit, following the best practice of isolation of such residents to the extent possible for 14 days while monitoring for COVID-19 symptoms. The relevant portion of QSO-20-14-NH states as follows:

When should a nursing home accept a resident who was diagnosed with COVID-19 from a hospital?

A nursing home can accept a resident diagnosed with COVID-19 and still under Transmission Based Precautions for COVID-19 as long as the facility can follow CDC guidance for Transmission-Based Precautions. If a nursing home cannot, it must wait until these precautions are discontinued. CDC has released Interim Guidance for Discontinuing Transmission-Based Precautions or In-Home Isolation for Persons with Laboratory-confirmed COVID-19. Information on the duration of infectivity is limited, and the interim guidance has been developed with available information from similar coronaviruses. CDC states that decisions to discontinue Transmission-based Precautions in hospitals will be made on a case-by-case basis in consultation with clinicians, infection prevention and control specialists, and public health officials. Discontinuation will be based on multiple factors (see current CDC guidance for further details).

Note: Nursing homes should admit any individuals that they would normally admit to their facility, including individuals from hospitals where a case of COVID-19 was/is present. Also, if possible, dedicate a unit/wing exclusively for any residents coming or returning from the hospital. This can serve as a step-down unit where they remain for 14 days with no symptoms (instead of integrating as usual on short-term rehab floor, or returning to long-stay original room).

Additionally, ODH is aware that some facilities are turning away essential healthcare personnel, such as hospice care providers and home health agencies, as well as governmental representatives. Please be aware that these groups were excluded from Director of Health Acton's Order limiting visitation and these individuals must be allowed to enter the facility provided they pass the appropriate screening. ODH sent out a letter to you dated March 16th explaining this and CMS gave similar guidance in QSO-20-14-NH.

If you have questions, concerns, or suggestions, please contact the Ohio Department of Health's Bureau of Regulatory Operations at (614) 644-6220.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James Hodge". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

James Hodge
Chief, Bureau of Regulatory Operations