

## COVID-19 Guidance for Home Health Agencies

Hunt Country Health Services recognizes the need for COVID-19 infection prevention guidance to help home care, home health, and hospice agencies that provide care to clients/patients in their homes. This work includes helping people around the house, helping them with personal care, and providing clinical care. The risk for severe illness with COVID-19 increases with age, with older adults at highest risk. It is important that you help your staff take precautions to protect their clients and themselves at this time.

### Before going to the home of a client

- Explore remote ways of providing or preparing to provide care, such as:
  - Telehealth and electronic charts.
  - Plan important care services by phone video chat or on a webinar.
- Identify and prepare for times when staff might come into direct contact with the client:
  - Providing medication, meal prep in the home, cleaning, laundry, or other times where there is direct patient or item contact in the home
- Limit staff on hand to provide only essential care needs at this time.
- Ask all patients and other household members to wear a mask while the staff member is in the home.
- Screen patients and household members for symptoms and possible exposures to COVID-19 prior to entering the home.

### For In-Home Clients/Patients with Known or Possible COVID-19

- Set them up in a separate bedroom with a separate bathroom away from others if possible.
- Ensure that all people in the home have personal protective equipment to use (at least gloves and facemask) and use healthy habits, such as covering their coughs and sneezes, throwing used tissues away, and washing their hands often.
- Make sure that pets in the home are cared for by others.

### Discharge Planning

- At discharge, give medical information about communicable diseases, advanced directives and Physician Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment (POLST) to other service staff.
- **If caring for clients/patients with COVID-19, you must share infection status** with the receiving service provider and transport staff before the discharge/transfer.

### Infection Control Planning for Agencies

- Educate patient family members about steps taken to prevent spread of COVID-19:
    - Monitor and exclude ill staff and visitors, keeping in touch with loved ones from a distance (such as, phone, video call, etc.).
    - CDC advice for people living with someone with COVID-19
  - Screen staff for symptoms daily before beginning work.
  - Develop and share policies for flexible medical leave with staff and instruct them on how and who to tell if they believe they are sick with COVID-19. Sick staff should stay home.
- Refer to:
- CDC's Interim Guidance for Managing Healthcare Personnel with SARS-CoV-2 Infection or Exposure to SARS-CoV-2
  - VDH Interim Recommendations to Mitigate Health Care Worker Staffing Shortage During the COVID-19 Pandemic
- Identify staff at higher risk for severe COVID-19 and have them work with other clients/patients or stay home from work.
  - Track the date and time of all visitors, health care providers, and others in the home.
  - Schedule home visits with people who have or may have COVID-19 at the end of the day to keep risk of spreading COVID-19 during other visits.

## Protecting Staff and Patients

- Train staff on standard, contact, and droplet precautions.
- Provide staff with the following personal protective equipment (PPE) and provide training for proper use:
  - Facemask (surgical mask with ear loops or mask with ties)
  - Eye protection (for example, goggles or disposable face shield that covers front and sides of face)
  - Gown
  - Clean, nonsterile gloves
    - Fit-tested N95 Respirator if staff are working with patients/clients who have suspected or confirmed COVID-19. If you are having difficulty obtaining N95 respirators through your usual supply channels, contact your local emergency management agency. Contacts are listed here: <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov>
- Healthcare providers should wear a surgical face mask and eye protection, according to Virginia Department of Health and CDC Guidance.
- CDC's Optimizing the Use of PPE provides guidance on actions to take when PPE is in short supply or you do not have PPE. Using crisis measures is not ideal and could put health care providers at risk for disease.
  - Prioritize gowns for use during activities that produce splashes and sprays and during high-contact patient care activities.
  - Prioritize eye protection for use during activities that produce splashes and sprays and during activities where prolonged face-to-face or close contact.

- [Interim Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations for Healthcare Personnel During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) Pandemic](#)
- [Interim Guidance for Implementing Home Care of People Not Requiring Hospitalization for Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Caring for Someone at Home](#)

## More COVID-19 Information and Resources

Stay up-to-date on the [current COVID-19 situation proclamations](#), [symptoms](#), [how it spreads](#), and [how and when people should get tested](#).

A person's race/ethnicity or nationality does not, itself, put them at greater risk of COVID-19. However, data are revealing that communities of color are being disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. This is due to the effects of racism, and in particular, structural racism, that leaves some groups with fewer opportunities to protect themselves and their communities. [Stigma will not help to fight the illness](#). Share only accurate information to keep rumors and misinformation from spreading.

- [Virginia Department of Health 2019 Novel Coronavirus Outbreak \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Virginia Coronavirus Response \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Find Your Local Health Department or District](#)
- [CDC Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Stigma Reduction Resources](#)

**Have more questions?** Call our COVID-19 Information hotline:

Virginia Department of Health: 1-877-275-8343 or website: <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov>

CDC : 1-800-232-4636 or website: <https://www.cdc.gov>>cdc-info or:

Please contact a health care provider.