



Visit our COVID-19 Page Here

Dear Member:

#### **CMS Recommendations for Nursing Home Phased Reopening**

Last evening, CMS issued recommendations on a nursing home phased reopening for states to consider when reviewing conditions that would support loosening nursing home restrictions. The recommendations included topics such as testing, cohorting, mitigating risk, survey restoration and visitation practices. The guidance encourages state leaders to collaborate with the state survey agency and local health departments to decide how these criteria should be implemented including when it will be appropriate to do so here in Maine. Given the critical importance in limiting COVID-19 exposure in nursing homes, CMS recommended that decisions on relaxing restrictions be made with careful review of the following facility-level, community, and state factors. While we await more detailed analysis from AHCA/NCAL, MHCA will continue to work with the Maine CDC and the DHHS Division of Licensing to provide in the moment updates on the plan for our member facilities. Read the [press release](#), [guidance](#) and [FAQs](#) from CMS.

With respect to testing, there are legal considerations that have been raised, particularly from states who are ahead of Maine in terms of reopening. Regarding refusal to be tested, residents that refuse to be tested for COVID-19 cannot be discharged involuntarily, unless the facility is otherwise incapable of caring for residents with a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19. Employers can make COVID-19 testing a condition of employment and terminate or not hire a staff person who refuses to obtain a COVID-19 test. For more information, please review the reimbursement and legal section of AHCA/NCAL's [Preparing for Widespread Testing in LTC Guidance](#).

#### **Highlights from today's Medical Director/Clinician Call**

##### **Maine COVID-19 by the Numbers:**

- 1741 cases, increase 28 from yesterday
- 1088 recovered
- 73 deaths
- 44 hospitalized currently
- 19 ICU, 11 vent
- Outbreaks:
  - Bangor and Portland Shelters
  - A Few Businesses
  - Several cleared LTC facilities

CDC HAN from 05/18/2020: Outlines a strategy for much expanded testing per HETL. Reminder: testing should be ordered by clinicians. Congregate and Group Settings should consult CDC to

develop a strategy for testing when there is 1+ case. Outbreak is still 3+ cases per CDC definition.

The new CMS guidance for reopening nursing homes was acknowledged but just to say that it was issued last night and many on the call agreed that the State should move cautiously on these issues and ensure that all necessary pieces are in place before considering reopening (i.e. testing, PPE, staffing considerations, etc.) Visitation and communal dining in LTC is still not recommended per current CDC guidance.

The latter part of the call focused on social isolation of long term care residents as an unintended side effect of restricted visitation. Some participants shared what they are doing to address this issue. The Division of Licensing shared that it is finalizing the funding for the statewide CMP technology grant to assist with communication and reminded those on the call that in all visitation scenarios, i.e. window visits, outside visits, etc., the Division will be looking to ensure that proper infection control standards are being maintained. MHCA is developing a list of innovative ways that facilities are helping residents and families stay connected and providing opportunities for socialization and will share it with this group, and the membership, once finalized.

### **Innovation Corner**

MHCA members are creative, resourceful and, above all, committed to their residents and staff. Starting today, we are introducing this **Innovation Corner** in the Daily Briefing to highlight the interesting and meaningful ways in which members are helping residents and families stay connected and providing opportunities for socialization. If you have an idea to share, please email [ngrosso@mehca.org](mailto:ngrosso@mehca.org) with **Innovation Corner** in the subject line. Today's Corner comes to you from Phil Cyr, Owner/Administrator of Caribou Rehab & Nursing Center.

### ***One facility's plan for outdoor visitation***

To facilitate resident and family visits in a safe manner with warmer weather approaching, Caribou Rehab & Nursing Center is preparing to mark off, with line paint, some outdoor resident-family visiting areas. They chose paint in anticipation of visitation restrictions being in place for some time. Using the [attached design template](#) the facility is creating 7'x14' visit "boxes" that include the recommended 6-foot social distancing guidelines. The facility chose 7' wide because it has exterior benches that size.

In addition to creating the space, the facility is writing a policy/procedure to describe that visitation will be done by appointment only, between 12 noon and 5 PM, 7 days per week. Each visit will begin on the hour (12,1,2,3 and 4) for a period of 30 minutes. Residents and families must wear masks and agree to maintain the social distance. The 30 minutes after each visit will be used by staff to help residents return to their rooms, allow time for staff to disinfect the benches and area as needed, and assist the next set of residents to the visiting area. Recognizing that the facility may have 5 or 6 of these visiting boxes full at the same time. It will have additional staff on duty to facilitate the rotation of residents, monitor adherence to the 6' distancing requirement and verify that outside packages are not being given to residents.

MHCA appreciates the thought that has been put into the design and process and hopes it brings joy and comfort to residents and their families who've patiently waited to visit one another during this pandemic. Questions may be directed to Phil Cyr at [PhilCyr@CaribouRehab.com](mailto:PhilCyr@CaribouRehab.com).

### **Check MHCA website for updates on PPE opportunities**

Just a reminder to visit [www.mehca.org/covid](http://www.mehca.org/covid) regularly for updated PPE purchasing information. Our alternative supplier list was recently updated. Also, please let us know if there is a particular piece of PPE that you have been unable to find/purchase (ie gowns, shoe coverings, etc) and we'll reach out to our contacts to see what's available.

- [MHCA List of Non-FDA Alternative PPE Suppliers](#) (Updated 05/15/20)

Thank you for all you do to care for your residents and staff.

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