



Technical Bulletin



Date: March 30, 2020
Topic: Visitors Guide to Health Care Facilities
Contact: Melissa Peek-Bullock, State Epidemiologist, Office of Public Health Investigations and Epidemiology
To: All Health Care Providers and Facilities

Background

The Nevada Division of Public and Behavioral Health (DPBH) is committed to taking critical steps to ensure that all health care facilities, providers, and clinical laboratories are prepared to respond to the threat of COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses.

During this current SARS-CoV2 Pandemic DPBH requires that health care providers and facilities immediately notify local/state health authority of suspect; probable and confirmed COVID-19 cases and other patients with severe acute respiratory infection, or a cluster of respiratory illness (i.e., ≥ 3 patients or health care providers with new-onset respiratory symptoms).

Health care providers must educate staff, patients and family members to adopt proper measures to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 and follow appropriate infection control procedures especially for reusable patient care items.

Limitations on Visitors

To mitigate the spread of the COVID-19, Nevada Governor's COVID-19 Medical Advisory Team (MAT) provided guidance to restrict visitation in health care facilities including hospitals, critical access hospitals, psychiatric hospitals, inpatient hospice units, and intermediate care facilities for individuals with developmental disabilities. <https://www.cms.gov/files/document/qso-20-14-nh-revised.pdf>

Health care facilities should limit visitors only for those who aid- and/or provide important services to patients. Facilities should establish limited entry points and alternative sites to screen visitors for symptoms prior to entry. Additionally, they should encourage frequent hand washing and use of hand sanitizer before entering the facility and before and after entering patient rooms.

All health care facility visitors should be screened for:

- Fever and/or symptoms of a respiratory infection, such as fever, cough, sore throat and fatigue
- Being a contact to someone with known or suspected COVID-19 infection

Facilities should instruct visitors to limit movement within the facility (e.g., reduce walking the halls; trips to cafeteria; multiple rooms, etc.). Additionally, health care facilities are strongly encouraged to implement additional measures to increase communication with families (e.g., phone, FaceTime, Skype, Zoom, etc.), and offering hotlines so families can get an update on the facility's general status.

Some health care providers (nursing homes, hospitals, assisted living facilities, etc.) had probably restricted entry for staff from other Medicare/Medicaid certified providers who are providing direct care to patients. However, if such staff are appropriately wearing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), and do not meet criteria for restricted access, they should be allowed to enter and provide services to the patient.

For hospitals, this would also apply to organ procurement coordinators. Currently all hospitals in Nevada and nationwide are preparing for a surge in COVID-19 severely ill critical patients. However, donor hospitals are strongly encouraged to continue with plans to allow organ procurement coordinators into hospitals to discuss organ donation with families. **Ensuring continued access to life-saving organs is critical.**

The goal is to protect patients, staff and other personnel from harm and ensure that all providers are implementing prompt actions to prevent the spread of COVID-19. State/federal surveyors and other official representatives who are unable to meet PPE expectations outlined by CDC guidance <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/healthcare-supply-ppe.html>, to safely perform onsite surveys or essential services to patients and their families due to lack of appropriate PPE supplies are advised to refrain from entering a medical facility. They should conduct their survey interviews and conversation to obtain necessary information remotely, to the extent possible. Such individuals may continue direct communication once they have all necessary PPE and appropriate training to use such essential equipment.

Reporting

Health care providers should **immediately** notify both infection control personnel at their health care facility and their local/state health department in the event of a person under investigation (PUI) for COVID-19.

- **Nevada Division of Public and Behavioral Health (DPBH):** (775)-684-5911 (M-F 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM); (775) 400-0333 (after hours)
- **Southern Nevada Health District (SNHD):** (702)-759-1300 (24 hours)
- **Washoe County Health District (WCHD):** (775)-328-2447 (24 hours)
- **Carson City Health and Human Services (CCHHS):** (775)-887-2190 (M-F 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM); (775)-887-2190 (after hours)

For More Information: Please contact DPBH M-F 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM at (775)-684-5911. The after-hours line can be contacted at (775) 400-0333.



Lisa Sherych, Administrator
Division of Public and Behavioral Health



Ihsan Azzam, Ph.D., M.D.
Chief Medical Officer