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Infection Control Guidance for Home Care Providers Concerning COVID-19

The following is guidance for personnel of home health and personal care agencies who provide direct care to an individual in the home setting. These strategies are intended to help prevent the spread of the coronavirus and to protect home care recipients and providers from unnecessary exposures and transmission of COVID-19.

1. When making a home visit, identify clients at risk of having COVID-19 before or immediately upon arrival to the home. The client and any other person who will be in the home during the appointment (e.g., visitor, family member) should be carefully screened for the following:
 - a) Fever or respiratory symptoms (cough, shortness of breath or sore throat)
 - b) Close contact with a suspected or confirmed person with COVID-19
 - c) Travel from a COVID-19-affected community or geographic area within 14 days
 - d) Residing in a community where community-based spread of COVID-19 is occurring

If any one of these four criteria is present, a home visit should only be conducted by essential personnel. Assistance should be provided to the client in notifying their health care provider as needed. The following are suggestions for determining essential personnel:

- Essential personnel refers to direct care workers who provide services which, if interrupted would endanger the client's life, health or personal safety.
- Essential personnel may include nurses, home health aides, attendant care aides, homemaker aides, hospice care personnel and providers funded by Indiana FSSA.
- Even among essential personnel, the number who come into contact with the client should be minimized to reduce potential transmission.



2. Maintain at least a 6 feet distance from the client and other persons in the home whenever possible.
3. Wear a disposable facemask and gloves when providing direct care including touching or having contact with stool or body fluids.
 - a) Masks should be conserved, and only a single mask should be worn each day.
 - b) Throw these away after use and do not reuse.
 - c) When removing, first remove and dispose of gloves, then immediately clean your hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
 - d) Next, remove and dispose of the facemask and immediately clean your hands again with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
 - e) Should you encounter a PPE mask shortage, store your mask in a sealed (Ziploc or other) plastic bag and do not touch the front of the mask. Handle by the strings or ear loops. Perform hand hygiene after securing the Ziploc bag.
4. Wash your hands often and thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains 60% to 95% alcohol, covering all surfaces of your hands and rubbing them together until they feel dry. You should use soap and water if your hands are visibly dirty.
5. Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
6. Cover your coughs and sneezes. Use respiratory cough etiquette using your sleeve to cough; and when using a tissue, dispose of the tissue right away and perform hand hygiene immediately.
7. Clean high touch surfaces and objects frequently using household disinfectants that contain bleach products or alcohol greater than 70%.
8. Monitor your client's symptoms.
 - a) If the client has flu-like symptoms such as fever, cough or shortness of breath, both the client and the caregiver should wear face masks.
 - b) If you suspect a possible COVID-19 case, assist the client in contacting their health care provider, and if unavailable, call the Indiana State Department of Health Epidemiology Resource Center at 317-233-7125 [317-233-1325 after hours].
9. For home care instructions for clients who have or are being evaluated for COVID-19, visit: https://www.in.gov/coronavirus/files/IN_COVID-19_Home_Care_3.18.20.pdf
10. Train a client's informal caregiver and/or family member as back-up care if services are disrupted for any reason; and work with the client's care manager to develop a back-up plan, especially for those clients without an available informal or family support.

11. Get plenty of rest, drink fluids, eat healthy foods, and manage your stress.
12. **Stay home when you're sick.** Alert your client and your client's case manager, if appropriate, to tell them you will be staying home and who will be providing care in your place.
13. Personnel who develop symptoms confirmed or suspected to be COVID-19 should call their provider for testing authorization
 - a) The provider can have testing request entered into the ISDH request form: <https://redcap.isdh.in.gov/surveys/?s=WMKD7PHEPF>. **Please note that this form is intended to be used only by health care providers, Infection Preventionists, or other health care personnel.**
 - b) For questions, please call ISDH at 317-233-4672 to have testing approved. This line is open 24/7
 - c) Providers also have the option to work with Lilly, LabCorp or Quest for commercial testing should they deem appropriate.
14. Personnel should also note that their local health department will be making contact with them if their test comes back presumptive positive and will instruct them on home monitoring of all close contacts.
15. Personnel should follow home quarantine recommendations from the CDC - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-risk-assesment-hcp.html> - and can return to work when the following conditions have been met:
 - a) Fever free for at least 72 hours (that is three full days of no fever without the use of medicine that reduces fevers).
AND
 - b) Other symptoms have improved (for example, when your cough or shortness of breath have improved).
AND
 - c) At least seven days have passed since your symptoms first appeared.

Resources

- Guidance for Infection Control and Prevention Concerning COVID-19 in Home Health Agencies (CMS): <https://www.cms.gov/files/document/qso-20-18-hha.pdf>
- Preventing the Spread of COVID-19 in Homes and Residential Communities - Recommended Precautions for Household Members, Intimate Partners, and Caregivers (CDC): <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-prevent-spread.html>
- Interim Guidance for Implementing Home Care of People Not Requiring Hospitalization for COVID-19 (CDC): <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-home-care.html>