

## Welcome!

The *Latest in Long-Term Care* from CDPHE's Residential Care Strike Team and Infection Prevention and Control Unit is a new biweekly analysis exploring the latest topics impacting skilled nursing facilities in Colorado. Our goal is to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in all high-density environments serving older adults and people with disabilities. We are working to achieve this goal through five key strategies:

- Proactive and reactive monitoring and testing
- Infection control enforcement and education
- Providing personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Ensuring separation and isolation of residents and workers with COVID-19
- Helping stabilize staffing at facilities



The Residential Care Strike Team is committed to helping residential care facilities provide safe care in the least restrictive way possible and recognizes that the mental health of residents is equally as important as their physical health. We look forward to communicating about the latest news and topics impacting long-term care facilities in Colorado and appreciate you checking out our inaugural issue!

---

## Hot Topic Questions

### **Is there different guidance being considered for vaccine breakthrough cases? Do we need to shut everything down for one breakthrough case?**

The guidance on how to respond to a breakthrough case is the same for a resident who is not vaccinated and tests positive for COVID-19. A "breakthrough" case refers to someone who tests positive 14 days or more after receiving their final vaccine. Since the vaccine is not 100% effective, and surveillance testing should be conducted once a week at every facility, it is not uncommon to find breakthrough cases in these settings. Individuals can still get sick with COVID-19 after receiving the vaccine. Regardless of vaccination status, any resident or staff who tests positive for COVID-19 should be excluded from work or isolated appropriately, and rapid response testing should begin. Use the [guidance for rapid response](#).

### **When should eye protection be worn?**

Staff working in facilities located in counties with >10% two-week average test positivity rate (based on the [Colorado Covid Dial](#)), should wear eye protection (e.g. face shields, goggles) during all resident care activities to protect against viral spread from asymptomatic individuals. Staff should follow all standard, contact and droplet precautions for residents with fever, respiratory symptoms, or when COVID-19 is suspected. See the [guidance for isolation precautions](#).

# Ongoing Long-Term Care Vaccination Program

As the Pharmacy Partnership for Long-Term Care (LTC) Program comes to an end, it is important to ensure LTC facilities have continued access to COVID-19 vaccine for unvaccinated residents and staff. Most vaccine clinics provided by the program will likely be completed by the end of March 2021. The CDC recently issued guidance for [Ensuring Access to COVID-19 Vaccine in Long-Term Care Facilities](#), which requests LTC facilities contact their pharmacy to see if they are enrolled to provide COVID-19 vaccinations.

- The Residential Care Strike Team has outlined [ongoing and continued vaccination next steps](#) for long term care facilities on our website. Please visit this page as soon as possible to ensure you understand the next steps/instructions for facilities with unvaccinated staff and residents.

\*\*\* Vaccine supplies remain limited and your facility may need to be put on a waiting list for those in need of the vaccine after the Pharmacy Partnership Program comes to an end. Facilities are encouraged to contact their long term care pharmacy as early as possible to ensure staff and residents are able to be vaccinated. See our [website](#) for full details.\*\*\*

## ...Hot Topics

### After staff and residents are vaccinated, should they continue regular COVID-19 testing?

Yes, facilities should continue to follow recommendations for [COVID-19 testing](#) in nursing homes. Experts need to understand more about the protection that COVID-19 vaccines provide before deciding to change recommendations on steps everyone should take to slow the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19.

[COVID-19 vaccination](#) will not influence the results of viral (nucleic acid or antigen) COVID-19 tests. Positive tests should not be attributed to the COVID-19 vaccine.

While experts learn more about the protection that COVID-19 vaccines provide under real-life conditions, it will be important for everyone to continue using all the tools available to help stop this pandemic. To protect yourself and others, follow these recommendations:

- Wear a mask over your nose and mouth
- Stay at least 6 feet away from others
- Avoid crowds
- Avoid poorly ventilated spaces
- Wash your hands often
- Stay home if you are ill and avoid others that report illness

Together, COVID-19 vaccination and following CDC's recommendations for [how to protect yourself and others](#) will offer the best protection from getting and spreading COVID-19.

### Will all of our residents still need to wear masks, and will our staff still need to wear personal protective equipment (PPE) in the facility after receiving the COVID-19 vaccinations?

Yes. COVID-19 vaccines will be an important tool to help stop the pandemic. However, even after vaccination everyone should continue to follow all the current guidance to protect themselves and others. This includes wearing a mask, staying at least 6 feet away from others, avoiding crowds, following facility guidance on visitation and infection control, and clean hands often. CDC's current recommendations will continue to be the primary way that LTCF residents and HCP are protected until vaccination is widespread.

## When do I need to quarantine?

Vaccinated inpatients and residents in health care settings should continue to quarantine following an exposure to someone suspected or confirmed COVID-19; outpatients should be cared for using appropriate Transmission Based Precautions. This exception is due to the unknown vaccine effectiveness in this population, the higher risk of severe disease and death, and challenges with social distancing in healthcare settings.

On March 10th, CDC updated quarantine recommendations for vaccinated individuals. CDPHE is currently reviewing these recommendations and will work to ensure there are consistent quarantine recommendations across all residential care facilities. Updated guidance will be distributed once available.

Residential Care Settings quarantine guidance:

<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/info-by-product/clinical-considerations.html>

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1J8XurY-o0SsWHT-668sRCNAUVAJSTc9j/view>

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1B2ERnkuo2kcE\\_nj6LcXKw4W\\_isnpxUwg/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1B2ERnkuo2kcE_nj6LcXKw4W_isnpxUwg/view)

## Is CDPHE aware of the new CMS visitation recommendations?

Yes. On March 10th the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) updated visitation recommendations for skilled nursing facilities. CDPHE is currently reviewing these recommendations and will work to ensure there are consistent visitation recommendations across all residential care facilities.

Residential facilities need to continue to ensure that all residents and staff are following all of the current infection control measures and need to continue to follow the screening and testing requirements set forth in the [Fifth Amended Public Health Order \(PHO 20-20\)](#) and related guidance documents. Conducting ongoing surveillance and outbreak testing remain important tools for monitoring and managing the spread of COVID-19.

- The COVID-19 vaccination will not influence the results of PCR, rapid molecular or antigen COVID-19 tests.
- Positive tests should NOT be attributed to the COVID-19 vaccine. For more information on this please visit [COVID-19 vaccination](#).

Please stay tuned in the coming days for updates and direction.

## Do I need to wear a mask and avoid close contact with others if I'm fully vaccinated?

Yes. Not enough information is currently available to say if or when CDC will stop recommending that people [wear masks](#) and [avoid close contact](#) with others to help prevent the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19. Even after vaccination, everyone should continue to follow all the [current guidance](#) to protect themselves and others from the spread of COVID-19. This includes wearing a mask, staying at least 6 feet away from others, avoiding crowds, following [facility guidance](#) on visitation and infection control, and cleaning hands often.

# Project Firstline: Training Collaborative for Healthcare Infection Prevention & Control

Healthcare workers are the first line of defense against diseases like COVID-19. That's why the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) has partnered with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to present Project Firstline, a collaboration of health care, public health, and academic partners.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted gaps in infection prevention and control (IPC) knowledge and practice in healthcare and other settings nationwide. Project Firstline aims to prepare frontline health care professionals – from clinicians to environmental service workers – and the public health workforce to protect themselves, their patients and their communities from infectious disease threats, such as coronavirus disease (COVID-19). This stronger, better prepared workforce will also improve the prevention of health care associated infections.

Project Firstline will begin with short, no-cost, web-based, intensive modules focused on foundational concepts of infection prevention and control and grounded in behavior change principles and practices. This training will ensure every worker in every setting is empowered with the science and reasoning behind essential IPC practices, and can confidently apply those practices to protect themselves, their facility, their family, and their community.

Please help CDPHE understand the current learning needs within our state by completing a brief survey to better understand Colorado's workforce needs. The information you share will be used to develop future training opportunities. Please share this link with all of your team members so that we may hear from a wide variety of caregivers and support staff.

Reach out to CDPHE's Project Firstline team at [CDPHE\\_project\\_firstline@state.co.us](mailto:CDPHE_project_firstline@state.co.us) with any questions.

## Take the Survey:

Scan the QR code or follow the link below:  
[https://redcap.link/Project\\_Firstline\\_Survey](https://redcap.link/Project_Firstline_Survey)



[Residential Care Strike Team Website](#)



[residentialcarestriketeam@state.co.us](mailto:residentialcarestriketeam@state.co.us)