



Guidance for Independent Living Connected to Licensed Levels of Care (AL, SNF) – 4/2/20

IHCA strongly recommends that providers with multiple levels of care including independent living settings take precautionary steps to reduce the risk of COVID exposure in their facilities. Facilities with multiple levels of care that include an independent living setting face unique challenges as many restrictions in place relating to regulated levels of care are not applicable in the independent living context.

IHCA recommends providers with multiple levels of care including an independent living setting implement precautions such as the following:

Staffing

- Ensure staff are not moving from one care setting to another (for example ensure your SNF staff are not responding to IL resident issues). This may require reassigning staff and ensuring consistent scheduling in one area to ensure adequate coverage in each area.
- If possible, have staff enter only the entrance to the care setting in which they work (for example AL staff do not enter the IL setting etc.).
- If possible, implement flexible sick leave to ensure people stay home when ill
- Strongly consider implementing staffing screening recommendations similar to those implemented in your other levels of care at the start of each shift.
 - Please note if you implement this it will need to be done consistently

Residents

- If you haven't already, prohibit independent residents from entering or visiting the higher levels of care such as AL or SNF portions of the building. They should be treated as visitors to these areas.
- Communicate with independent living residents regularly about the public health emergency, steps you are taking at each level of care, and why these steps are necessary.
- Post notices on exits/entrances to the community asking residents to stay home and avoid public places (except for necessary medical appointments) in order to minimize the risk of COVID-19 exposure to themselves and their neighbors.
 - Please note you cannot require residents stay home in an Independent Living setting but can strongly encourage it.
- Provide guidance from trusted sources such as the CDC to residents on what they can do to protect themselves (hygiene, cleaning, etc). See helpful links portion of this document.
 - Consider providing any guidance in larger print size and in a format easily understandable for residents.

- Some large independent living facilities have access to an internal TV channel for resident announcements, if you have access to this resource consider putting your guidance on that channel.
- Try to find ways to support residents relating to coping with stress and anxiety.
- Try to provide support for residents in communicating with their loved ones through electronic communication.
 - For example- Provide instruction or education on how to use popular communication apps or methods such as FaceTime, Skype, etc.
- Ask residents to self-monitor for symptoms and contact their health care provider when appropriate.

Facility Operations

- Temporarily close independent living amenities such as entertainment rooms to minimize the potential for exposure between residents.
- Remove chairs in common areas to discourage congregation during the crisis or alternately post notices in those areas that the common room is closed to protect residents.
- Temporarily cancel independent living events and activities in the facility.
- Follow CDC guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting recommendations for Communities (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html>)
- Minimize visits from vendors or redirect them to one entrance and minimize any necessary entry into the facility.
- Where appropriate alter schedules to reduce congestion of people/staff.
- Temporarily close communal dining

*Please note you should review the contractual arrangement you have with your independent living residents prior to implementing restrictions to ensure you continue to comply with your contractual obligations.

Screening Recommendations for Staff

Use most recent AHCA guidance on screening available here

<https://www.iowahealthcare.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2020/04/COVID19-Screening-Checklist-SNF-Visitors.pdf>

Helpful Links and Information

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/older-adults.html>

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/get-your-household-ready-for-COVID-19.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fprepare%2Fget-your-household-ready-for-COVID-19.html

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/retirement/faq.html>

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public> (Contains a number of infographics for download that may be helpful in communicating information)