COVID-19 Q&A Hour for Long Term Care

WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Healthcare-Associated Infections (HAI) Program

Shoreline, WA

Housekeeping

Attendees will be in listen only mode

Self-mute your lines when not speaking

Type questions into the question window. Please include the type of facility you are from in your question (e.g., NH) and indicate your county.

Nursing Home

Participants from long-term care, regulatory, public health

No confidential information presented or discussed. This is an educational webinar and does not constitute legal advice.

Local guidance may differ, please consult with your Local Health Jurisdiction (LHJ): https://www.doh.wa.gov/AboutUs/PublicHealthSystem/LocalHealthJurisdictions

This is the LTC COVID-19 Q&A Hour!

A chance to connect, ask questions, and learn about the COVID-19 response and infection prevention guidance

Panelists

WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

ICAR PROGRAM DETAILS

Our free, non-regulatory ICARs provide facilities with infection prevention recommendations and resources on how to keep residents and staff safe.

What We Do

- Provide support with an infection prevention expert
- Assist with addressing gaps in your current infection control protocols for COVID-19 or other infections
- Offer up-to-date guidance and resources

Who We Serve

- Long Term Care Facilities (Assisted, Skilled, Behavioral Health, Nursing facilities, and Adult Family Homes)
- Outpatient Settings
- Acute and Critical Access Hospitals

To Learn More or Schedule an In-Person or Virtual Visit:

http://doh.wa.gov/ICAR

Contact Us:

HAI-FieldTeam@doh.wa.gov (General)

Washington State Department of **Health**

In Partnership With
- Local Health Jurisdictions
- LeadingAge Washington

- Washington Health Care Association
- Adult Family Home Council of WA State
- Washington State Hospital Association

WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

HAI-AR SECTION EMAIL ADDRESSES

Please refer to the table below to find the email most appropriate for your needs

Email Path	Description
HAI@doh.wa.gov	General healthcare associated infection questions
HAI-Covid@doh.wa.gov	COVID19-specific healthcare associated infection questions
HAIEpiOutbreakTeam@doh.wa.gov	Epidemiological outbreak assistance and healthcare associated infection questions
HAI-FieldTeam@doh.wa.gov	Schedule an ICAR for your facility
HAI-FITTesting@doh.wa.gov	Respiratory Protection related questions www.doh.wa.gov/ltcrpp

Fit Test Reminder

Contact the DOH Occupational Health Team if you:

- Have been waiting for your initial fit testing since 2021

- Have questions about learning how to conduct your own fit testing

- Want access to the 3M online medical evaluation (free of charge to you for a limited time)

HAI-FitTest@doh.wa.gov

Fit testing for requests made in 2021 will conclude at the end of April 2022.

Project Firstline Podcast

Episodes

1. Introduction and HAIs
2. PPE
3. Hand Hygiene
4. MDROs
5. ALFs and SNFs
6. Hospital Settings
7. *Candida auris*
8. Coming soon: Respiratory Protection

Purpose

- Discuss and identify the importance and impact of infection prevention on our lives and the lives of our community

- Project Firstline | Washington State Department of Health

Long-Term Care COVID-19 Immunization Champion Award

Long Term Care Facility Booster

- There is support for onsite vaccinations for residents and staff
  - Long Term Care Pharmacy
  - Local Health Jurisdiction
  - Department of Health survey to request help:
    - https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/DQ5K9WV
  - Contact COVID.Vaccine@doh.wa.gov

- Onsite support may encourage staff to get vaccinated because of the ease of access

We want to hear from you!

- Micro learning topics – what do you want to learn more about that will help with your facility infection control practices?

- Input your ideas into Question window noting "Topics: …"

- *Thank you!*

Upcoming LTC Q&A Schedule

Please plan to attend these upcoming micro learning sessions!

Today's discussion:

- Routine Testing Practices

Tentative April micro learning topics -

- Apr 14 – Routine Testing Practices (repeat)
- Apr 21 & 28 – Norovirus Resources

ROUTINE COVID-19 STAFF TESTING IN LONG TERM CARE FACILITIES

Healthcare-Associated Infections and Antimicrobial Resistance Section
Office of Communicable Disease Epidemiology

Who Conducts Staff Routine Testing?

Current Guidance

DOH continues to recommend that all healthcare personnel be included in routine testing, regardless of vaccination status, if resources allow.

Routine Testing for All Staff

Routine Testing for ALL STAFF			
Facility Type	Required/recommended	CDC Level of Community Transmission**	Minimum Frequency*
SNF	Required by CMS QSO-20-38-NH***	Low transmission	Not recommended
		Moderate transmission	Once a week
		Substantial and high transmission	Twice a week
All other licensed LTCFs	Follow LHJ direction, otherwise, optional if resources are available.	Low transmission	Not recommended
		Moderate transmission	Once a week
		Substantial and high transmission	Twice a week

Reference: Long-Term Care Facility Testing for Staff and Residents (wa.gov)

ROUTINE COVID-19 STAFF TESTING

Routine testing is separate from exposure testing or outbreak testing!

Routine testing can be done in the facility or other designated area

Best Practice: Designated area in the facility that is not easily accessible by the general public or residents

Symptomatic testing, or post-exposure testing, would generally be conducted in an outdoor area.

Best Practice: Using a drive through or outdoor testing location

Before the Test

Testing Activity	Risks	Risk Mitigations

1. Choose the area
 	
2. Perform a risk assessment of the area to identify what could go wrong, such as breathing in infectious material or touching contaminated objects and surfaces
	Potential exposure to harmful biological material by aerosol generation	1. Considerations in choosing a testing location include:
		
		o Well ventilated room
		o Area allows for 6 feet social distancing of HCP present
		o Choose an area with low traffic to avoid general public and resident access while testing is occurring
		o Designate clean and dirty areas
		
		2. Have a testing policy in place
		
		o Follow the Core Principles of Infection Prevention
		o Have a disinfection process
		  - Before testing begins
		  - After testing ends
		  - Between each specimen collection
		  - In the event of a specimen spill

Reference: Guidance for SARS-CoV-2 Rapid Testing Performed in Point-of-Care Settings | CDC

During the Test

Testing Activity	Risks	Risk Mitigations
Specimen collection	Exposure to harmful biological material by aerosol generation	o Ensure there is no clutter, food and drinks present in the testing area o Have signage for when testing is occurring o Do not delay putting used testing supplies (waste) into the trash to prevent contamination of surfaces o Use hand hygiene and change gloves between handling specimens to prevent cross contamination

Reference: Guidance for SARS-CoV-2 Rapid Testing Performed in Point-of-Care Settings | CDC

After the Test

Testing Activity	Risks	Risk Mitigations
Discarding materials from completed tests	Exposure to harmful biological material through spread of biological material across testing surfaces	o Follow Core Principles of Infection Prevention o Carefully pick up and dispose completed test materials in a designated waste container o Disinfect all testing surfaces after completion of testing

Reference: Guidance for SARS-CoV-2 Rapid Testing Performed in Point-of-Care Settings | CDC

What to Avoid

- ❑ High traffic areas such as the lobby

- ❑ Poorly ventilated spaces

- ❑ Lack of disinfection

- ❑ Movement from dirty to clean areas

- ❑ Food and drink in testing area

- ❑ Mishandling waste

- ❑ Not social distancing

- ❑ Cluttered testing surfaces

Questions?

Washington State Department of Health

To request this document in another format, call 1-800-525-0127. Deaf or hard of hearing customers, please call 711 (Washington Relay) or email civil.rights@doh.wa.gov.

REVISED STRUCTURE FOR Q&A CALL

A Modified Approach to the Q&A Call

Benefits to you:

- Ensure reliable answers to questions **prepared ahead of time** and presented on the slides during the call, including guidance source

- Reduce inconsistencies in responses

- Receive a copy of the slides with questions and answers soon after the call **instead of an FAQ spreadsheet**

Revised Call Structure

- **Starting today!**

- **Submit questions by 5pm on Monday each week before the Thursday call**

- Questions and answers will be presented during the call and sent out afterwards

- Questions related to the slides will be addressed live

- Additional new topics will be answered live as time allows and added to following week's slides

- Any unanswered questions will roll over to the following week's slides along with any new mailbox questions
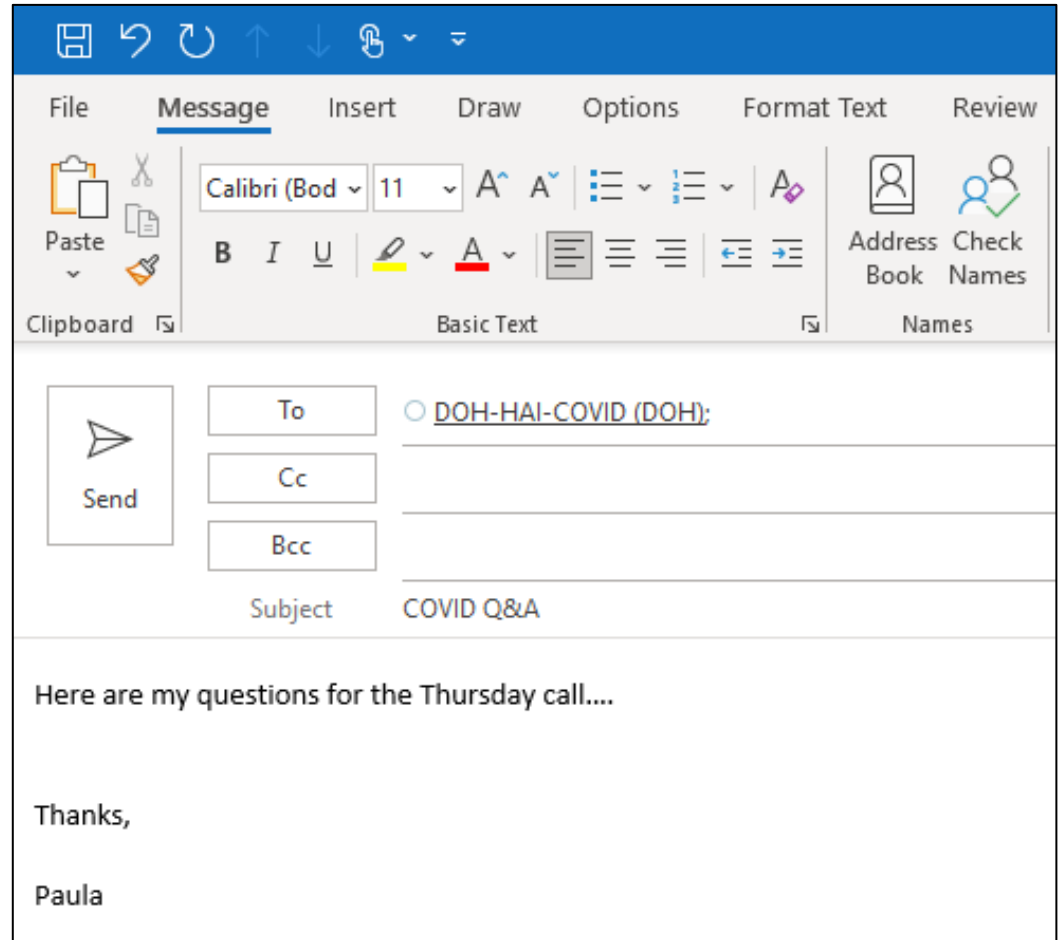
How to Submit Your Questions

Subject Line: COVID Q&A Call
Email: HAI-COVID@doh.wa.gov
Due by: COB Monday

MAILBOX
QUESTION AND ANSWER

—

Question

How do I get more testing supplies?

Answer

- First, work with your LHJ on getting test supplies

- If LHJ is unable to meet your need or you have additional questions they were unable to address email: covidtestingsupport@doh.wa.gov

Question

Are SNFs required to enroll in ELR and/or NHSN?

Answer

- To report POC antigen tests, SNFs have the option to report test results in NHSN or enroll in ELR.

- [Reporting COVID-19 Test Results for Point-of-Care Testing Facilities | Washington State Department of Health](#)

Question

Are there any LTCFs reporting therapeutics to NHSN?

Answer

- CMS-certified SNFs are required to report Therapeutics and antivirals to NHSN as part of their COVID-19 CMS reporting requirements.

- Other LTCFs – ICF/IID and Assisted Living facilities can voluntarily report therapeutics to NHSN if the facility is enrolled and has active users

Question

If a LTCF has a vaccine/therapeutics provider (i.e., Pharmacy), would it be the provider that should report vaccination and therapeutics administered, or through the facility?

Answer

- SNFs report aggregate data on vaccinations and therapeutics to NHSN.

- The vaccine provider agreement requires report of administrations into WAIIS. If the pharmacy administers, then they may report to WA IIS. It is the responsibility of the vaccine provider to ensure administrations are reported in WAIIS. The specifics of how that occurs can vary based upon a prior written agreement with the facility.

Question

If a resident uses an OTC test, without direction or instruction from the LTCF, does the facility need to report the test result?

Answer

- No. If the LTCFs did not direct, perform, or interpret the test the facility does not need to report the test result.

- If the LTCF directed, performed, or interpreted the test, the facility should report according to DOH Reporting COVID-19 Test Results for Point-of-Care Testing Facilities

Question

Can AFHs restrict resident visits in their room if they have a public room they prefer be used?

Answer

- The safest approach would be to visit in the resident's room, and if able to maintain physical distance from others, a public or common area could be used.

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/infection-control-recommendations.html

Question

If the visit takes place in a private room:
1) Must masks always be worn?
2) Can visitors hold hands, hug, and touch the resident?
3) Can visitors sit by the bedside and read to the resident?

Answer

1. The safest approach is for all to wear masks in healthcare settings.

If in low to moderate community transmission, visitors may remove masks in the resident's room if individuals:

- o are up to date with COVID-19 vaccines
- o are not ill, exposed to someone with COVID-19 or immunocompromised

Visitors should wear source control when around other residents or HCP, regardless of vaccination status and regardless of community transmission level.

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/infection-control-recommendations.html

Answer

2. & 3. The safest approach is to maintain physical distancing of at least 6 feet, when possible.

The CDC guidance for healthcare settings states in healthcare facilities located in counties with low to moderate community transmission, residents and visitors may have physical contact if the patient and all their visitor(s) are up to date with all recommended COVID-19 vaccine doses.

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/infection-control-recommendations.html

Question

What visitation restrictions are providers allowed to make?
Can a provider restrict the amount of time a visitor visits or if visits from non-ESP can occur?

Answer

○ There are no visitor restrictions in place for LTC

- LTCFs should follow visitor requirements in place pre-COVID

- LTCFs should allow for residents' rights

- Must continue to adhere to COVID infection prevention core principles

Example: LTCFs might have to put some restrictions in place, such as limiting the number in space at the same time, to ensure physical distancing.

Question

Do ALFs only have to follow specific guidance from WA State or do CMS and CDC guidelines apply?

Answer

○ [CDC guidance for healthcare settings](#) applies to all healthcare settings, including AFHs.

Question

Please review how to use the CDC Data Tracker.
I thought our county was in low transmission and we don't have to wear masks in meetings.

Answer

- For current data, use the CDC Data Tracker Community Transmission rate (not the COVID-19 Community Level) [CDC COVID Data Tracker: County View](#)

- Select the state, county and select Community Transmission from drop down under Data type.

- CDC updates data daily and the rates can change from day to day, especially in smaller counties.

- Recommend checking Data Tracker weekly:

  - If level of community transmission increases to a higher level, you should begin testing staff at the higher frequency recommended.

  - If level of community transmission decreases to a lower level, continue testing at the higher frequency until the level of community transmission has remained lower for at least two weeks before reducing testing frequency.

[QSO-20-38-NH REVISED (cms.gov)](#)

Answer

○ Today's Community Transmission rates for Washington:

Q & A Section

Please type your questions into the question window and tell us what type of facility you are from (e.g., ALF, SNF, AFH) and what county you are in