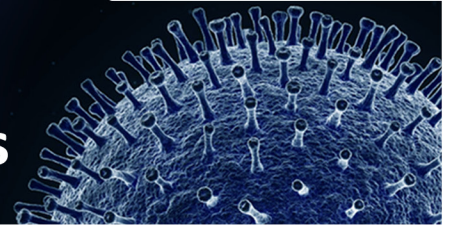


March 30, 2020

# Guidance on Hospital Transfer and Admission of Patients to Skilled Nursing Facilities/Nursing Facilities



**ON MARCH 6, 2020, Governor Andy Beshear declared a public health emergency. On March 13, 2020 President Trump declared a national emergency. The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to acute care hospitals and skilled nursing facilities/nursing facilities (SNF/NF) on recommended procedures for discharging hospitalized patients who need admission to a SNF/NF.** Skilled nursing facilities and nursing facilities are critical partners during the COVID-19 emergency. This guidance has been developed to protect the health and safety of SNF/NF residents while assuring patients can be transferred to post-acute facilities when it is safe to do so. Unless acute care hospitals can discharge patients safely and timely to SNFs/NFs and other post-acute facilities, patients throughout Kentucky will not be able to access the inpatient hospital care they need during this emergency.

This guidance is consistent with the recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). The network of care for patients throughout the healthcare system must be maintained even in the middle of a pandemic. By working together, hospitals and post-acute facilities will be able to continue to deliver the high level of care each of us provides.

## Protocols to Discharge from Hospital to Skilled Nursing Facilities/Nursing Facilities

1. All patient transfers will be coordinated with the receiving facility in accordance with this protocol and in compliance with federal and state law.
2. The hospital will screen all patients ready for post-acute discharge for temperature and respiratory symptoms.
3. A COVID-19 test will not be performed on asymptomatic patients as testing all patients without symptoms would further burden the health system and be unlikely to uncover additional cases.
  - a. The risk of hospital acquired COVID-19 is very low due to the screening of all hospitalized patients with consistent respiratory syndromes and extensive infection prevention measures starting at the time of admission. The risk is even lower in persons without symptoms. Importantly, a negative test does not preclude future infection.
4. A COVID 19 test will be performed on a patient ready for discharge only when the patient develops new respiratory infection symptoms, in which case the patient is not likely to be ready for discharge;
5. No patients with progressing respiratory symptoms will be discharged from the hospital until stable and ready to go to a SNF/NF.
6. The following transfer protocols are recommended based on the category of the patient:
  - ▶ **CATEGORY 1: Patients with no clinical concern for COVID-19 (includes negative screening for fever, cough and shortness of breath, and no travel):** Acceptable for transfer to SNF/NF for discharge (no change in standard process)

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- ▶ **CATEGORY 2: Patients investigated for possible COVID-19, but negative testing:** If patient has negative COVID-19 testing during hospitalization, negative influenza testing, and meets usual clinical criteria for discharge, then acceptable for transfer to SNF/NF, if facility is able to admit the patient in accordance with state and federal law
- ▶ **CATEGORY 3: Patients under investigation for COVID-19, but test results pending:** Will NOT be transferred to SNF/NF until test results completed
- ▶ **CATEGORY 4: Patients positive for COVID-19, but transmission based precautions have been discontinued:** Criteria for discharge includes the patient has been afebrile (defined as below 100 degrees) for at least 72 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications and improvement in respiratory COVID-19 symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath); and, at least 7 days have passed since symptoms first appeared.

The CDC requires patients for whom transmission based precautions have been discontinued, but who continue to have persistent symptoms of COVID-19 (i.e., persistent cough), be transferred to a facility where the patient can be placed in and restricted to a single room. COVID-19 patients for whom transmission based precautions have been discontinued and whose symptoms have resolved may be transferred without restrictions.

- ▶ **CATEGORY 5: Patients positive for COVID-19 for whom transmission based precautions are still required:** A patient actively infected with COVID-19 but otherwise ready for discharge may be transferred to a SNF/NF that is clinically able to admit the patient to its facility with transmission based precautions, which includes but is not limited to, adequate PPE and a specific unit designated to care for COVID-19 residents. If the facility does not have transmission based precautions established, the hospital shall not transfer the patient to that facility.

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**For additional information, contact your association.**



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