

**Non-Agency Based In-Home Caregivers** (e.g. PCAs, In Home Support Staff, etc.) **2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Guidance**

*March 19, 2020*

***Intended Audience:*** *In-home caregivers who* ***do not*** *work for an agency.*

***Special Note:*** *The term “individual” is used throughout this document to refer to individuals receiving services, with the acknowledgement that different programs use different terms.*

This guidance is based on what is currently known about the transmission and severity of 2019 novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19). The Connecticut Department of Public Health is working closely with the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to provide updated information about the COVID-19 outbreak.

This guidance will be updated as needed and as additional information is available. Please regularly check https://portal.ct.gov/Coronavirus for updated interim guidance.

**Unless you answer ‘yes’ to any of the questions below, you should continue to provide services and follow precautions as outlined in this memo:**

Do I have fever (Higher than 100.3 degrees) or new respiratory symptoms such as cough, shortness of breath, or sore throat?

Have I travelled to a [COVID-19-affected area](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/hcp/clinical-criteria.html) (outside of U.S.) in the past 14 days?

Have I had close contact with a person (live with or are within 6 ft. of for over 15 minutes) diagnosed with COVID-19 in the past 14 days?

Have I been diagnosed with COVID-19 or told by a healthcare provider that I may or do have COVID-19?

## Background

**What is Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)** and **how does it spread?**

* COVID-19 is a respiratory virus. Current symptoms have included mild to severe respiratory illness with fever cough, and difficulty breathing.
* According to CDC, the virus is spread mainly from person-to-person, between people who are in close contact with each other (within about 6 feet).
* Spread is from respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

**Who should be most cautious?**

* Those considered “high risk” include people over the age of 60, anyone with underlying health conditions or a weakened immune system, and pregnant women.

**What should you be doing to mitigate the risk of spreading COVID-19?**

* **Screen yourself and the individuals you serve for any of the conditions below:**
* Sick with fever (Higher than 100.3 oF) or newly developed respiratory illness such as cough, shortness of breath, or sore throat
  + Recent international travel (i.e., within the past 14 days) from [COVID-19-affected geographic areas](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/hcp/clinical-criteria.html)
  + Close contact with a person diagnosed with COVID-19 in the past 14 days
* Live-in caregivers should be screening themselves and the individuals they serve daily
* **Avoid unnecessary out of state or international travel and avoid large gatherings or crowds.** 
  + As a caregiver, you provide essential services that help others to function throughout their daily lives. Your health and the health of those you serve is of utmost importance. You should try to limit travel as much as possible to limit possible contact with the virus.
  + Cancel large and do not attend large gatherings (greater than 250 people).
* **Practice good hygiene daily.**
  + Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially:
    - After going to the bathroom;
    - Before eating;
    - After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing; and
    - Upon entering and exiting the individual’s home.
  + If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
  + Cover a cough or sneeze with a tissue and dispose of tissue.
  + Don’t touch your eyes, nose or mouth without first carefully washing your hands.
  + Properly clean all frequently touched surfaces on a regular basis using everyday [cleaning products](https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2020-03/documents/sars-cov-2-list_03-03-2020.pdf).
  + Avoid sharing dishes, drinking glasses, eating utensils, or towels.
  + Wash dirty dishes in a dishwasher or, if by hand, with warm water and soap.
  + Laundry can be washed in a standard washing machine with warm water. It is not necessary to separate laundry used by an individual from other household laundry.
  + In order to avoid germs, do not shake dirty laundry or “hug” dirty laundry to your chest to carry it.
* **Monitor your own emotional health.**
  + Emotional reactions to stressful situations such as new viruses are expected. Remind yourself that feeling sad, anxious, overwhelmed, or having trouble sleeping or other symptoms of distress is normal.
  + If symptoms become worse, last longer than a month, or you struggle to participate in your usual daily activities, reach out for support and help.
  + The national Disaster Distress Helpline is available with 24/7 emotional support and crisis counseling for anyone experiencing distress or other mental health concerns. Calls (1-800-985-5990) and texts (text TalkWithUs to 66746) are answered by trained counselors who will listen to your concerns, explore coping and other available supports, and offer referrals to community resources for follow-up care and support.

## Steps to follow if you, or someone you know or care for is sick

* **If you are sick:**
  + Do not go in to work. Call your health care provider for further guidance.
  + Follow the steps outlined on page 3.
* **Follow the flow chart on page 3 to determine the best care path if you are ill or work with someone who is diagnosed with COVID-19 or is experiencing symptoms.**
* **If you live with a sick individual some general guidance includes:**
  + Keeping the sick person in a separate, well-ventilated room and apart from other people and pets as much as possible.
  + If a separate space is not available, keeping a distance of at least six feet from people who are well.
  + A sick person who is coughing or sneezing should wear a mask when around other people. If the sick person cannot wear a mask, the caregiver should wear a mask.
  + Providing the sick person with a separate bathroom if available and a trash bag within reach. The bathroom should be cleaned every day using a household disinfectant according to the directions on the label. Wear gloves while cleaning.
  + Limiting activities outside the home until the sick person is feeling well for at least one day.
  + Limiting outside visitors.

**Non-Agency Based In-Home Caregivers Screening Flow Chart**

**Start Here**

**If you answered YES to ANY of these questions:**

**NO**

**If you answered NO to ALL of these questions:**

**Before providing care for an individual in the home, complete the following self-check screening every day:**

1. Do I have fever (Higher than 100.3 degrees) or new respiratory symptoms such as cough, shortness of breath, or sore throat?
2. Have I travelled to a [COVID-19-affected area](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/hcp/clinical-criteria.html) (outside of U.S.) in the past 14 days?
3. Have I had close contact with a person (live with or are within 6 ft. of for over 15 minutes) diagnosed with COVID-19 in the past 14 days?
4. Have I been diagnosed with COVID-19 or told by a healthcare provider that I may or do have COVID-19?

**YES**

**NO**

**Continue providing services to this individual using prevention strategies including:**

* Wearing a **face mask** for personal protection;
* Wearing **gloves** when touching the individual;
* Limiting physical contact; and
* Maintaining personal hygiene for yourself and the individual as described in this guidance

Are you **over the age of 60,** have **underlying health conditions** or a **weakened immune system** or are **pregnant**? If the answer is **YES to any of those questions,** you are at high risk for COVID -19 and should take this into consideration in your decision to continue working**.**

**If the individual answered YES to ANY of these questions, the individual should call their health care provider and follow the provider’s guidance.** If they need your help to make this call, you should provide assistance.

**Do you or does the individual have face masks for protection?**

**YES**

**Do not go in to work.**

Call the individual for whom you provide care to tell them you are unable to provide care.

If you know someone else who may be able to work, mention this to the individual. If the individual has questions, refer the individual back to their case manager or agency that completed their assessment. If they are uncertain about how to contact their case manager or assessment agency, they should choose the number below that is closest to where they live:

Eastern CT:1-860 885-2960

Northeast CT:1-860 589-6226

Northwest CT 1-:800-870-1852

Western CT:1-203 465-1000

Southwest CT:1-203 333-9288

South Central CT:1-203 752-3040

If the individual is in an emergency, call 9-1-1

**Continue to provide care to this individual in the home**, using strategies of prevention including:

* Washing your hands often with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds, or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer
* Covering your mouth when you cough or sneeze, using a tissue or the inside of your elbow
* Limiting physical contact with the individual to only what is needed for care tasks

**Perform a self-check screening and screening for the individual every day, even if you are a live-in caregiver**

**YES**

**If they answered NO to ALL of these questions:**

**NO**

**Call ahead and complete the following screening for the individual or their representative or *anyone who lives in the individual’s house:***

1. Has a fever (Higher than 100.3 degrees) or new respiratory symptoms such as cough, shortness of breath, or sore throat?
2. Has travelled to a [COVID-19-affected area](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/hcp/clinical-criteria.html) (outside of U.S.) in the past 14 days?
3. Has had contact with a person (live with or are within 6 ft. of for over 15 minutes) diagnosed with COVID-19 in the past 14 days?
4. Has been diagnosed with COVID-19 or told by a healthcare provider that they may or do have COVID-19?