

STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Deidre S. Gifford, MD, MPH
Acting Commissioner



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HEALTHCARE QUALITY AND SAFETY BRANCH

BLAST FAX 2021-18

TO: All Facilities

FROM: Commissioner Deidre S. Gifford, MD, MPH

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Deidre S. Gifford".

CC: Deputy Commissioner Heather Aaron, MPH, LNHA
Adelita Orefice, MPM, JD, CHC, Chief of Staff
Barbara Cass, RN., Branch Chief, Healthcare Quality and Safety Branch
Donna Ortelle, Section Chief, Facility Licensing and Investigations Section

DATE: June 29, 2021

SUBJECT: **Recommendations for Management of Health Facilities during Hot Weather**

In anticipation for significant hot weather during the summer months, please review your emergency plans, check your generators and its fuel supply, ensure the completeness of emergency food and other supplies, and as always, check with your local weather channel via television and radio.

These weather conditions can impact cooling systems and overall patient/resident health. Please see the attached recommendations for management of patients/residents during hot weather. While the attachment is a guidance document that was issued in July of 2010, it remains very relevant.

While the incidence of COVID-19 in Connecticut's nursing homes has improved and stabilized, facilities must continue to have an awareness of controlling ambient temperatures. Please note the following guidance previously identified in a June 22, 2020 guidance document.



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Use of Air Conditioning (AC) and Fans

Ensuring comfortable ambient temperatures is important for prevention of heat stroke and dehydration. While there is no official Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance about fans and heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) use, there are several considerations that NHs should consider:

- In COVID-positive and COVID-negative/exposed rooms, fans can potentially spread infectious droplets beyond a normal range. HVAC and window AC units have air return vents to reduce the air pressure gradient and are thus a lower risk.
- Air should flow from clean to dirty areas. Exhaust from AC units should be kept away from areas where people may pass by this unfiltered air.
- AC units should have dampers open to maximize outdoor air being brought in, and vents pointed away from individuals who may be infected.
- Window air conditioning units should be adjusted to maximize fresh air intake into the system, blower fans should be set on low speed and pointed away from room occupants to the extent possible.
- Ceiling fans should be adjusted so that fins are rotating in a direction that draws air up toward the ceiling rather than down onto occupants.
- Window fans should be pointed to exhaust air out the window rather than bring it in, because the large volume of air brought in by fans can push air from the room into common areas.
- Free standing fans not in a window should not be used because they are just blowing air around the room and not providing any dilution benefit.
- Nursing Homes should develop a policy or process whereby the Infection Control Practitioner oversees risk assessment, cleaning and maintenance, and safe placement of AC units and fan.