

Nebraska Health Care Association, LeadingAge Nebraska & Dept. of Health & Human Services Survey Guidance on COVID-19 Screening and Communal Dining

DHHS: Dr. Ashraf, Becky Wisell, Dan Taylor, and Connie Vogt
NHCA & LAN: Heath Boddy, Jenifer Acierno and Cindy Kadavy

1) SELF-SCREENING OKAY – OVERSIGHT AND FOLLOW-UP MUST BE TIMELY

Connie Vogt clarified that self-screening by employees is allowable, per the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), however, there must be oversight of this process to ensure the screening is timely and complete and, should an employee indicate he/she has symptoms or exposure, there is follow up to ensure the employee does not expose others in the facility.

2) RESIDENTS* DINING TOGETHER WITH SOCIAL DISTANCING AND OTHER PRECAUTIONS IN PLACE OKAY AND RETROACTIVE TO MARCH 13, 2020

Becky Wisell shared that the following CMS clarification, found in the FAQ attached to [QSO-20-28-NH](#), is retroactive to March 13, 2020, when CMS issued [QSO-20-14-NH REVISED](#), which directed facilities to “cancel communal dining.”

14. Q: Communal Dining: Are all residents forced to eat in their room?

A: Residents are not forced to eat in their rooms. Residents may still eat in dining rooms, however, nursing homes should adhere to social distancing, such as being seated at separate tables at least six feet apart. We note that social distancing should be practiced at all times (not just while dining). We further note that eating in dining areas with appropriate social distancing only applies to residents without signs or symptoms of a respiratory infection, and without a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19. Facilities should refer to CDC guidelines for managing residents with signs or symptoms of a respiratory illness.

*Only applies to residents (1) without a positive diagnosis, (2) without symptoms and (3) without known exposure.

3) RESIDENTS* DINING TOGETHER MUST BE EITHER 6' APART OR HAVE BARRIERS IN PLACE

DHHS representatives clarified the following Long-Term Care COVID-19 Phasing Guidance on “communal dining” during all three phases complies with CMS guidance and the use of “or” is correct. Residents without a confirmed diagnosis, without symptoms and without known exposure can either be spaced at least 6 feet apart or have appropriate barriers in place, with no more than 2 people at a table.

Residents may eat in the same room with appropriate social distancing, spaced at least 6 feet apart or with appropriate barriers in place, such as plexiglass, with no more than 2 people at a table.

*Only applies to residents (1) without a positive diagnosis, (2) without symptoms and (3) without known exposure.

4) DINING BARRIERS MUST BE OF SUFFICIENT HEIGHT TO PROTECT THE TALLEST PERSON

DHHS representatives further clarified that if facilities are using plexiglass barriers – for dining purposes only – the height of the barrier must be sufficient to prevent transmission of droplets from the tallest person who may be eating in that space. Barriers must also be disinfected between uses. This guidance is compliant with CMS guidance.