Independent and Assisted Living – Admissions and Returns to the Community

May 4, 2020

In light of ongoing concerns in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, the following standards for admission and return of elders to our communities have been developed. They are consistent with CDC recommendations and based on the present recommendations of state public health authorities, though these may vary from state to state.

Relaxation of these standards for isolation generally, masking, admission of family and vendors will depend on further government regulations, but is anticipated sometime in the month of June, assuming the present trends continue. This could be sooner or later, depending on the locality.

Independent Living (IL) and Assisted Living (AL) features vary widely from state to state and among each community. It is recognized that COVID positive cases and PUI may need to be handled differently in various scenarios. This document offers guidance and options to safely admit or readmit residents into these communities giving IL/AL operators appropriate options.

New admission from home in the community – no COVID-19 symptoms:

- If AL PUI cohort area or unit is available, utilize community's furniture for 14-day quarantine period if available, and return to general AL community after 14 days if remains asymptomatic.
- If cohort area is not available, shelter in new apartment for 14 days or use cohort area in affiliated facility if available.

New admission from another long-term care facility – no symptoms:

- If quarantined at prior facility for 14 days prior to move-in with no symptoms during this period, then shelter in apartment for 14 days at move-in.
- If not quarantined for 14 days, Quarantine (defined below) in apartment. Utilize PUI cohort area or unit with furniture for quarantine/shelter period, if available.

New admission from hospital – no symptoms:

- If PUI cohort area or unit is available, utilize community's furniture for 14-day quarantine period if available, and return to general AL community after 14 days if no symptoms.
- If AL Cohort unit is not available, consider use of cohort area in affiliated facility. Duplicate negative swabs are preferred if available prior to transfer to AL.
- If no testing is available, require 14-day shelter in apartment at move-in.

New admission from hospital – COVID positive in convalescence:

- It is unlikely that AL communities will have the capacity to accept patients with residual symptoms. Admission will be evaluated on a case by case basis with admission decision contingent on ability to meet the resident's required level of care.
If admission goes to SNF higher level of care during convalescence, may be admitted to non-cohort area of AL if: (1) 14 days after symptom onset, afebrile without fever-reducing medications for 3 days and minimally symptomatic; OR (2) regardless of time elapsed afebrile for 3 days without fever-reducing medications and with minimal symptoms and with duplicate negative molecular assays at least 24 hours apart.

Must shelter in apartment for 14 days after AL admission.

Return of existing resident from hospital ER visit (must be consistently masked) – no respiratory symptoms:

- 14-day shelter in apartment required upon return.
- If symptoms develop during quarantine, and higher level of care is required, transfer to higher level of care PUI or COVID+ cohort unit.
- Return to AL from higher level of care as for new admissions, above.
- If symptoms do not require higher level of care, institute quarantine (cohort area in AL if possible) and ensure proper PPE utilized for all care.

Return of existing resident from hospital after admission (over 24 hours) – no respiratory symptoms:

- If PUI cohort area or unit is available, utilize community's furniture for 14-day quarantine period if available, and return to general AL community after 14 days if no symptoms.
- If AL cohort unit is not available, will consider use of cohort area in affiliated facility.

Return of existing resident from hospital after admission (over 24 hours) – COVID+:

- If necessary for symptom management, require resident to enter SNF cohort unit for COVID+ until 7 days after onset AND 3 days afebrile without the use of fever-reducing medications AND 3 days with minimal respiratory symptoms (2 negative tests preferred).
- Shelter in apartment for 14 days upon return into AL.
- If AL Enhanced (NYS regulatory language), see below.

Assisted Living facilities with Enhanced nursing services – COVID positive resident with symptoms:

- Higher level of care (SNF) may not be necessary for symptom management.
- Quarantine in apartment (cohort area if possible) until 14 days after onset AND 3 days afebrile without the use of fever-reducing medications AND 3 days with minimal respiratory symptoms.
- If duplicate negative testing available may relax quarantine to sheltering for the 8th through 14th days after onset.
- Ensure proper PPE is utilized for all care – see below.
Assisted Living – Memory Care (Special Needs in NYS): Special considerations depending on circumstances for memory care or behavioral residents

Generally, the memory care AL resident is not able to be quarantined in their apartment, so for the safety of all other residents, new admissions will not be taken at this level of care unless:

- The resident has been successfully quarantined at another facility for 14 days prior to move-in; OR
- The resident is able to go to a cohort unit for COVID PUI's for 14 days prior to move-in, and following the guidance above; OR
- The resident is able to go to a SNF cohort unit for COVID PUI's following the guidance above.

Quarantine vs. Shelter in Apartment:
Quarantine means the resident is either a PUI or COVID positive. Quarantine requires proper PPE – see below. Shelter in apartment requires the resident to stay in their apartment but does not required full quarantine PPE. During quarantine or sheltering the resident should use a procedure mask, if tolerated, for all encounters with other people.

Required PPE:

Residents: The newly admitted patient must wear a procedure mask during all care activities if the patient is able to tolerate a mask. He/she must be room confined.

Staff: All staff will be assigned specifically to the cohort areas. Staff should avoid using the same PPE for both PUI and virus-positive cases, and accordingly should be specifically assigned if feasible to one or the other area to conserve PPE. In these cohort areas all staff should be equipped with gown, gloves, N95 mask and eye protection which may be used throughout a shift. Donning and doffing of gowns, masks, and face shields or goggles should be minimized, and N95 masks should be changed if soiled or damaged. N95 wearers should preferably have been fit-tested for their specific mask type, but fit-testing may be waived if necessary. If N95 masks are unavailable then procedure masks may be used, as per CDC guidance. Staff may work in non-cohort areas if absolutely required for operation of the facility but should not take PPE from cohort to non-cohort areas.

Independent Living move-ins:
Residents will be screened and will not be allowed to move in if they have traveled to/from an affected area or had symptoms or a fever in the last 14 days. A move may be scheduled if they clear screening. Resident must shelter in apartment for 14 days upon move-in with no other resident contact. They may leave for walks outside but must maintain a 6 foot distance from all other residents during this time, and mask as required.

Note – for all move-ins:
- Family will not be allowed to enter the community for visitation at move-in.
- Furniture and new resident belongings should be brought to the entrance closest to the apartment by the family/movers, wiped down with disinfectant, and moved in by staff if able.
- If staff are not able to move items into the apartment, the fewest number of people needed to move items should be screened, and then move items in maintaining at least a 6-foot distance from other residents at all times.