

Session 3: Approaches to Cohorting (Resident Location) in Nursing Homes during COVID-19

Key Takeaways:

- **Know where to find policies and procedures that address immediate steps to take when a new positive COVID-19 case is documented, or if there is a person with new signs/symptoms or recent exposure to a COVID-19 positive person.**
- Have a training/education plan for staff, visitors, vendors/contractors on how to safely interact with COVID-19 positive residents and how to conduct work on a designated COVID-19 unit.
- Describe the process for how to interact with all residents and staff if there is a COVID-19 outbreak or suspected outbreak (with tests pending) anywhere in the nursing home.

Identification of written policies and protocols that guide resident location and staff assignment during the pandemic allows teams to manage risks that may contribute to COVID-19 spread. The following question set can be used to facilitate discussions and reveal opportunities across and within key members of the team, residents and visitors. Please consider using/adapting them in your next huddles or team meetings.

Questions by Content

New COVID-19 positive cases or persons under investigation (PUIs)	How is screening conducted to identify new COVID-19 cases or PUIs as soon as possible? Who conducts screening and how often? How are results documented and communicated? What are the immediate steps if a new COVID-19 case or new PUI is identified? Do all staff (including CNAs) know the signs/symptoms of COVID-19 and how to report?
Special circumstances	If a person goes to the Emergency Department and returns to the nursing home in less than 24 hours, do they need to be on quarantine or on a designated COVID unit? If a person goes out to dialysis three times a week, what are the protocols for this resident's location in the nursing home? Are relevant staff (housekeeping, maintenance, nursing, laundry) aware of resident room cleaning and disinfecting protocols when a COVID positive resident is transferred/leaves the nursing home?
Follow-Up Plan (monitoring over time)	Are staff members able to articulate how and when to cohort COVID-19 positive and negative residents throughout the entire center? Can each staff member describe how they integrate resident cohorting into their workflows?
Improvement Concepts	When any new cases of COVID-19 or PUIs are identified, is a root cause analysis conducted by the team to determine potential contacts (sources of infection)? Are daily team COVID-19 huddles and case reviews conducted throughout the Center, including CNAs, infection preventionist, medical director and relevant departments?

Critical Questions for Leadership

	Are audits conducted on a regular basis to identify whether or not all staff are following protocols for resident location/cohorting and staff assignments to prevent or limit COVID-19 spread? Is there a contingency plan for how to manage potential staff shortages and is it accessible to all relevant workers?
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Key Concepts by Stakeholder Group

What do Medical Directors Need to know and discuss with the team?	In partnership with DON and Administrator, determine resident location and staff assignment policies and what actions to take when new COVID-19 cases or PUIs are identified. With DON and Administrator, make decisions on resident placement or cohorting (Isolation, Quarantine, COVID-19 unit, when to return to previous unit/room) and conduct case review regularly (e.g., daily).
What do DONs need to know?	That there is a staffing plan to promote resident safety, meet resident needs and support staff. Who on the team is responsible for monitoring resident location and changes, and staff assignments between COVID and non-COVID units? Enhanced Infection Prevention Plan for the center includes cohorting and staff assignments. Communicate with Staff – alert and update staff/families or care partners about related policies.
What Do Nurses/CNAs need to know?	Specific signs/symptoms of COVID-19 and how/when/to whom to report and immediate actions they should take. Where to look/who to ask for policies related to resident location and staff assignment during COVID-19. How to communicate with visitors about protocols related to visiting residents during COVID-19.

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<p>What does the interprofessional team need to know?</p>	<p>How are all staff supported psychologically/emotionally when being told they have fewer staff available than usual? How do cohorting and staff assignment requirements impact workflows and each staff person's role? Understand and communicate center-specific cohorting and staff assignments via signage or policies.</p>
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