



County of Santa Cruz

Health Services Agency

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COVID-19 Guidance for Home Health Care Agencies

Home health workers offer a valuable service to the health and well-being of our vulnerable community members. The Santa Cruz County Public Health Division is eager to work with home health agencies and workers to protect our community against COVID-19. Home Health Agencies and their staff have an important role in taking care of patients who have COVID-19 or Persons Under Investigation (PUI). A PUI is someone who might have the COVID-19 and needs to be placed by themselves (isolated). The need for home health care will likely increase along with the rise in people who contract COVID-19. A strong home health care workforce will help support patients recover from COVID-19.

The following guidelines are to help guard against infecting patients or becoming infected by patients so that everyone can remain healthy.

Home Healthcare Continues:

- Home health care services are essential services that will continue during the Shelter in Place order. The order can be found on www.santacruzhealth.org/coronavirus under Public Information. See sections 10 (b) & (f) for details about essential services.

Screen current and new patients:

- Before assigning a new patient to a home health care worker, Home Health Care Agency administrative staff must pre-screen patients and ask the following questions:
 1. Does the patient have any symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, cough, sore throat, or difficulty breathing)?
 2. In the last 14 days, has the patient or anyone in the household been exposed to
 - Someone who tested positive for COVID-19?
 - Someone waiting for test results for COVID-19?
 - Had contact with someone sick with respiratory illness?
 3. Someone who has traveled outside of the United States in the last 14 days.

Protect staff ([Refer to the Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services Guidance](#)):

- Make sure staff have access to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Refer to the [Sequence for Putting on PPE](#).
- Make sure staff are putting on and taking off PPE correctly and safely when working with a patient who tested positive for COVID-19 or may have been exposed to COVID-19.

Returning to work- (after staff have been out sick because of COVID-19)

- Work with your supervisor and occupational health to determine when to return to work.
- Refer to CDC guidance or criteria for [Return to Work for Healthcare Personnel with Confirmed or suspected COVID-19](#).

Reducing the amount of exposure for staff and patients- To the extent possible, please follow these guidelines:

- Assign the same staff member to the same patients. This helps reduce the risk of exposing staff and patients to the corona virus.
- Combine services for the same patient into 1 visit. For example, complete direct care, delivery of medications, and cooking into 1 visit.

Assess Workplace Exposure: See the [Center for Disease Control \(CDC\) Risk Assessment Guidance with Potential Exposure](#) to assist with assessment of risk, monitoring, and work restriction decisions for healthcare personnel with potential exposure to COVID-19.

For more detailed information about guidance for Home Health Care Agencies please visit the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) recently published guidance Home Health Agencies titled, [“March 10 CMS Guidance for Infection Control and Prevention Concerning Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) in Home Health Agencies](#)