

Eli's Hospice Insider

COVID-19: COVID-19 Testing Requirement Will Affect Your Staff

If you conduct your own tests, get your documentation ready.

Your experience with testing your staff for visits in the nursing home may change, thanks to a new interim final rule and survey memo officially require COVID-19 testing for staff entering the home.

"On August 25, 2020, CMS published an interim final rule with comment period (IFC). This rule establishes Long-Term Care (LTC) Facility Testing Requirements for Staff and Residents," the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services notes in an Aug. 26 letter to state survey agencies (QSO-20-38-NH). "Specifically, facilities are required to test residents and staff, including individuals providing services under arrangement and volunteers, for COVID-19," the letter says.



If you test your own staff, expect to provide documentation to the facility. "The facility may have a provision under its arrangement with a vendor or volunteer that requires them to be tested from another source (e.g., their employer or on their own)," the letter says. "However, the facility is still required to obtain documentation that the required testing was completed during the timeframe that corresponds to the facility's testing frequency."

Testing frequency will vary from twice a week to once a month, depending on the positivity rate of the county the facility is in as reported at <https://data.cms.gov/stories/s/COVID-19-Nursing-Home-Data/bkwz-xpvg>.

The survey letter, which includes a link to the rule, is at www.cms.gov/files/document/qso-20-38-nh.pdf.

This may spur more providers to follow St. Croix Hospice's lead in establishing their own COVID testing program.

"St. Croix Hospice has proactively launched weekly COVID-19 testing for all field staff as part of their enhanced infection control procedures," the Oakdale, Minnesota-based chain says in a release. "This weekly test will provide peace-of-mind to our field staff, our patients and their families, and healthcare workers at our partner facilities," St. Croix chief clinical officer **Mandy Cogswell** says in the release.