



Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services

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Randall W. Williams, MD, FACOG
Director



Michael L. Parson
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TO: All Long-Term Care Facilities

FROM: Director Randall Williams, MD, FACOG

DATE: June 15, 2020

RE: COVID-19 Communal Dining and Group Activity Guidance

Guidance Considerations for Communal Dining and Group Activities

The Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) is dedicated to protecting the health and safety of our citizens. This especially includes those Missourians that make their home in residential care facilities, assisted living facilities, intermediate care facilities, skilled nursing facilities, and intermediate care facilities for individuals with intellectual disabilities.

The below guidance is for facilities wanting to allow communal dining and group activities. Any prior guidance issue by the department will be updated to reflect the guidance below. Each facility will make the final decision to allow communal dining and group activities. Facilities may want to consider having a policy in place to determine these activities can be expanded without jeopardizing the health of the residents.

Facilities may want to consider the following when allowing communal dining and group activities:

- The facility has not had any COVID-19 staff or resident cases, or it has been two incubation periods (28 days total) since the last facility acquired COVID-19 positive case. Facility acquired cases include all staff who test positive and residents who test positive while residing in the facility. Facility acquired does not include residents admitted to the facility with a known positive diagnosis or residents who test positive upon admission as part of the facility's admission criteria, as long as these residents have resided in a designated COVID-19 unit since admission.
- Limiting communal dining and group activities to only residents who are:
 - COVID-19 negative or asymptomatic **and** not suspected to have COVID-19 OR
 - Previously COVID-19 positive but have been released from isolation based on either the symptom based or test based strategy.
- Allowing these residents to eat in the same room with social distancing (limited number of people at tables and spaced by at least 6 feet), hand hygiene, and use of a cloth face covering or facemask while not eating.*
- Restricting group activities in general, but allowing some activities with social distancing (described above), hand hygiene, and use of a cloth face covering or facemask*

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Facilities may also want to consider only allowing residents who are COVID-19 positive or who are symptomatic to participate in communal dining or group activities under the following circumstances:

Symptomatic residents with laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 or residents who are symptomatic with suspected COVID-19 but who have not had a laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 diagnosis meet either:

- *Symptom-based strategy*
 - At least 3 days (72 hours) have passed *since recovery* defined as resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications **and** improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath); **and**,
 - At least 10 days have passed *since symptoms first appeared*
- *Test-based strategy*
 - Resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications **and**
 - Improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath), **and**
 - Negative results of an FDA Emergency Use Authorized COVID-19 molecular assay for detection of SARS-CoV-2 RNA from at least two consecutive respiratory specimens collected ≥ 24 hours apart (total of two negative specimens).

Asymptomatic residents with laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 meet either:

- *Time-based strategy*
 - 10 days have passed since the date of their first positive COVID-19 diagnostic test, assuming they have not subsequently developed symptoms since their positive test. Note, because symptoms cannot be used to gauge where these individuals are in the course of their illness, it is possible that the duration of viral shedding could be longer or shorter than 10 days after their first positive test.
- *Test-based strategy*
 - Negative results of an FDA Emergency Use Authorized COVID-19 molecular assay for detection of SARS-CoV-2 RNA from at least two consecutive respiratory specimens collected ≥ 24 hours apart (total of two negative specimens).

*In the event a resident cannot safely wear a cloth face covering or a facemask, consider the use of an alternative method during group activities such as a face shield or plastic partition, when practical, along with social distancing.

The DHSS encourages facilities to view the information at the following link for the most up-to-date information:

<https://health.mo.gov/living/healthcondiseases/communicable/novel-coronavirus/>