



# COVID-19 — Home Healthcare

The Next Three Seconds Protects Your Life, Your Loved Ones, Your Livelihood®

## The N3L3 philosophy:

our approach to protecting workers from fatal and life-changing events.

Eastern Alliance is here to help. To learn more about Eastern's N3L3 program and access other safety resources, sign in and visit the Safety Tools on [www.easternalliance.com](http://www.easternalliance.com), or contact your Risk Management Consultant for assistance

**1.855.533.3444**

Eastern Alliance continues to actively monitor the global COVID-19 situation and implement practices to promote the health and safety for all. As we all venture through this time we are dedicated to helping our valued policyholders effectively manage their risks as they adapt to changing environments.

At Eastern Alliance we recognize that Home Healthcare Workers are essential in our communities. We understand that your employees continue to provide specialized care in patient homes. As employees continue to work in the homes, it is important that they are physically and mentally equipped with the resources to protect themselves from COVID-19. This resource includes information for best practices of home health care workers, along with the suggestions that CDC has posted.

## COVID-19 Home Healthcare Worker Best Practices

### Before the visit:

- Ensure employees are aware of the signs and symptoms of COVID-19: fever, cough, and shortness of breath. Employees should stay at home if they feel like they have any of these symptoms.
- Limit the number of patients receiving services on a weekly basis. Try to keep the same patient and caregivers paired to reduce contacts.
- Call the day before to confirm or schedule the visit. During the call, employees should ask questions regarding the patient, home residents and visitors. It is important to ask if **anyone** has visited or currently in the residence within the past 7 days that has any COVID-19 symptoms that may include fever, cough, or shortness of breath. All responses should be documented.
- Inform the patient and family that there are to be no visitors during the home health visit.
- Consider options for postponing or rescheduling visits for patients that do not require immediate care. Conduct telephone visits or video visits when possible to reduce exposure for the client and caregiver.
- Develop protocols for managing clients/patients with limited or no personal protective equipment (PPE). See CDC Strategies for Optimizing the Supply of PPE.
- Educate staff on how to handle patients that may feel sad, anxious, overwhelmed or display other symptoms of distress during COVID-19.
- Call all clients and/or caregiver to request that they attempt to have a mask for the client, and also that they sanitize prior to visit.
- Ask to have all pets to be put away/separated from the home care activities. In addition to the normal risk of animal attacks, pets can carry bacteria on their fur that can be harmful to humans, so it is possible a virus could be present as well without the animal actually being ill. So simple contact should be avoided – Remember a pet can't be sanitized!
- Wear separate shoes in your car than you wear during your visit. Keep the clean pair in your car and put on your "work" shoes before entering the home. Disinfect the work shoes before entering your car and keep them in a zip lock bag. Disinfect again before putting them back on for the next visit and repeat the cycle.
- Require staff to check and report their own body temperature at the start of each day and mid-afternoon to make sure they do not have a fever greater than 100.4 °F.
- Remain up to date on all events and notices, and developments within your community and clients/patients.



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### During the visit:

- Prior to entering the home or at the door, ask **again** if anyone has been in the home in the past 7 days that has any COVID-19 symptoms.
  - If anyone in the home possesses any symptoms or has tested positive for COVID-19 then the home healthcare worker should postpone the visit for a time when the person who is ill has had at least 7 days following onset of illness. Alert other staff scheduled to visit the same household.
- Personal Protective Equipment should be worn prior to entering the home. Encourage staff members to protect their personal health at all times with the use of protective facemasks and gloves. Provide staff with individual PPE kits to keep in their vehicles at all times, ensuring they have at least one PPE kit per patient and at least one extra kit. Provide employees with zip lock bags to safely dispose of their PPE after each home visit. Limit the items that are taken into the home to the ones you will need.
- Upon arriving at the patient's home, staff should check the patient's temperature to make sure they do not have a fever greater than 100.4 °F.
- Home Healthcare workers should be aware of surfaces in the patients home that are frequently touched may be contaminated with the virus. Items such as patient equipment (i.e. lifts, wheelchairs, walkers, canes, bedside commodes, urine bottles, bed controls, etc.), medicine bottles, bedside cups, bedside tables, countertops, kitchen areas, electronics/cell phones, remote controls, light switches, toilets, faucets, and doorknobs, etc. should be wiped down regularly with an appropriate disinfectant.
- Employees should practice social distancing, good hygiene and proper handwashing. Good hygiene includes:
  - Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or sleeve.
  - Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
  - Wave or limit touching when unnecessary.
- Handwashing is one of the best ways to protect yourself from getting infected. Require proper handwashing and/or the use of hand sanitizer after each physical interaction with a patient.
  - Proper handwashing should include: Wet hands with clean running water, apply soap, lather all sides of hands, between fingers, and under your fingernails, scrub hands for at least 20 seconds, rinse hands under clean running water, then dry hands using a clean towel or air dry hands.
  - Use hand sanitizer when washing with soap and water is not possible. Be sure to use an alcohol based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. To use hand sanitizers, apply the gel product to the palm of one hand, rub hands together, rub the gel all over the surfaces of your hands and fingers until hands are dry. This should take about 20 seconds.
- Cleaning and disinfecting should be completed with soap/water and diluted household bleach solutions. Household bleach solutions (1/3 cup bleach to one gallon water) will be effective against the COVID-19 virus. Employees should wear disposable gloves when performing cleaning/disinfecting tasks.
- Upon exiting the home, staff should safely clean any contaminated items or equipment that will need to be used at another patient's home. Staff should also clean any electronic devices that were used during the visit including tablets, cellphones, etc. PPE should be safely removed and disposed in a zip lock bag.



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### Other Best practices

- If a home health care person is informed they were in contact with someone who tested positive for Covid 19 they should:
  - No longer visit clients.
  - They should quarantine at home for 14 days. If they begin to have Covid 19 symptoms they should inform their employer.
- Put together safety packets in quart-sized zip lock bags for each visit to include two (2) pairs of gloves and a mask. The zip lock bag becomes the garbage bag.
- Keep a bag that accumulates the trash from the day in your car's trunk so it is easy to remove at the end of the shift. Take time to do one last wipe of the car's areas that are touched often.
- If employees travel out of the area for work or personal reasons, consider a 14-day quarantine, before exposing to clients or co-workers.

### For additional information and guidance, please visit:

Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) [www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov)

National Association for Home Care and Hospice (NAHC) [www.nahc.org/](http://www.nahc.org/)

National Association for Home Care and Hospice. Coronavirus Resources for Home Care and Hospice. [[nahc.org](http://nahc.org)]

Center for Disease Control Interim Guidance for Implementing Home Care of People Not Requiring Hospitalization for Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) [[cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov)]

Washington Department of Health Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Guidance for In-Home Care Providers during COVID-19 Outbreak. [[doh.wa.gov](http://doh.wa.gov)]

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Considerations for Homecare Actions in Infectious Disease Outbreaks. [[files.asprtracie.hhs.gov](http://files.asprtracie.hhs.gov)]

Harborview Medical Center UW Medicine Harborview Medical Center Home Assessment Team (HAT) Workbook – 2019-nCoV Response. [[covid-19.uwmedicine.org](http://covid-19.uwmedicine.org)]

Los Angeles County Department of Public Health Information for Patients Managed at Home and Contacts to COVID-19. [[publichealth.lacounty.gov](http://publichealth.lacounty.gov)]

New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Interim Guidance for Home and Community Healthcare Workers. [[nyc.gov](http://nyc.gov)]

San Francisco Department of Public Health Interim Guidance: Protecting Home Care Providers and Clients from COVID-19. [[sfcdcp.org](http://sfcdcp.org)]