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CMS Revised Long-Term Care Facility Testing Requirements

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) published an interim final rule on August 25, 2020 requiring nursing homes to test residents and staff for COVID-19, including individuals providing services under arrangement and volunteers, based on parameters set forth by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. On September 10, 2021, CMS revised the interim final rule with additional policy and regulatory revisions in response to the COVID-19 public health emergency.

The revised guidance includes new definitions for “close contact”, “level of community transmission” and “higher risk exposure”. The memo includes revised guidelines for testing of staff and residents. Regarding routine testing of staff, facilities should use the level of community transmission as the trigger for testing frequency. Facilities conducting tests are required to have a CLIA (Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendment) certificate and are subject to regulations requiring laboratories to report results for all testing completed.

Additional information about the federal rule can be found here: <https://www.cms.gov/files/document/qso-20-38-nh-revised.pdf>

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