



**California Department of Public Health  
Center for Health Care Quality  
AFC Skilled Nursing Facilities Infection Prevention Call  
December 15-16, 2021**

Recordings, notes and slides for the Wednesday Webinars and Thursday calls can be accessed at the Health Services Advisory Group (HSAG) registration website:

<https://www.hsag.com/en/covid-19/long-term-care-facilities/cdph-ip-webinars-past/>

The recording of the Tuesday, 12/14, 8am All Facilities Call can be accessed by using AT&T Meeting Recording: 1 (866) 207-1041 Access Code: 1403615

**CDPH Weekly Call-in Information:**

Tuesday 8:00am All Facilities Calls: 844.721.7239; Access code: 7993227

Wednesday 3:00pm SNF Infection Prevention Webinars: Register at: <https://www.hsag.com/cdph-ip-webinars>

Thursday 12:00pm SNF Infection Prevention Calls: 877.226.8163; Access code: 513711

**December Holiday Schedule**

- December 21 (Tues., 8 a.m.): 844.721.7239; Access code: 799 3227
- December 22 (Wednesday): **Cancelled**
- December 23 (Thursday): **Cancelled**
- December 28 (Tues., 8 a.m.): 844.721.7239; Access code: 799 3227
- December 29 (Wednesday): **Cancelled**
- December 30 (Thursday): **Cancelled**

The Wednesday Webinar covered the following topics:

- Testing Task Force Updates <https://www.hsag.com/globalassets/covid-19/snf12-15ef-508.pdf>
  - Impact of Omicron on COVID-19 Tests:
    - <https://www.fda.gov/medical-devices/coronavirus-covid-19-and-medical-devices/sars-cov-2-viral-mutations-impact-covid-19-tests#omicron>
  - Guidance on Expired Tests:
    - CDPH COVID Point of Care Test Expiration Guidance (November 10, 2021) <https://testing.covid19.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/332/2021/12/COVID-Point-of-Care-Test-Expiration-Guidance.pdf>
    - CMS Guidance for the Use of Expired COVID-19 Tests (see question #27): <https://www.cms.gov/files/document/frequently-asked-questions-faqs-clia-guidance-during-covid-19-emergency-updated-12-17-2020.pdf>
    - CDC Guidance for the Use of Expired COVID-19 Tests: [https://www.cdc.gov/csels/dls/locs/2020/cms\\_guidance\\_for\\_the\\_use\\_of\\_expired\\_sars-cov-2\\_tests.html](https://www.cdc.gov/csels/dls/locs/2020/cms_guidance_for_the_use_of_expired_sars-cov-2_tests.html)
- Immunization Branch Vaccine Update <https://www.hsag.com/globalassets/covid-19/immunization-branch-508.pdf>
  - Everyone in Long-term Care Needs Protection Against COVID-19 and Influenza poster: <https://eziz.org/assets/docs/COVID19/IMM-1413.pdf>

- COVID-19 Information for LTC Residents and Family Members (CDC): <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/recommendations/LTCF-residents.html>
- COVID-19 Vaccine Product Guide (Updated): <https://eziz.org/assets/docs/COVID19/IMM-1399.pdf>
- CDPH HAI Program Infection Prevention Training Opportunities <https://www.hsag.com/globalassets/covid-19/project-firstline-dec-15-508.pdf>
  - Project Firstline: IP Training for CNAs relaunching January 2022—Register at <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CHCQ/HAI/Pages/ProjectFirstlineRegistration.aspx>
  - CDPH IP Training for SNFs: Online Course [https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CHCQ/HAI/Pages/IP\\_TrainingForSNFs\\_OnlineCourse.aspx](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CHCQ/HAI/Pages/IP_TrainingForSNFs_OnlineCourse.aspx)
  - EVS Regional HAI Prevention Collaboratives
  - Ventilator-Equipped SNF Workgroup to Prevent MDROs
  - AFL 21-51: Assembly Bill (AB) 1585—Expansion of SNF Infection Preventionist (IP) Minimum Qualifications <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CHCQ/LCP/Pages/AFL-21-51.aspx>
- Healthcare-Acquired Infection (HAI) Updates & FAQs
  - <https://www.hsag.com/globalassets/covid-19/cdph-december15-508.pdf>
  - AFL 21-49: COVID-19 Infection Control Recommendations during the 2021 Holiday Season <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CHCQ/LCP/Pages/AFL-21-49.aspx>
  - CDPH Guidance on the Use of Antigen Tests for Diagnosis of Acute COVID-19: <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/CDPH-Guidance-on-the-Use-of-Antigen-Tests-for-Diagnosis-of-Acute-COVID-19.aspx>
- COVID-19 26-minute documentary about the day-to-day reality of the pandemic in nursing homes—Closed Doors, Open Hearts: Nursing Homes and COVID-19 <https://www.ahcancal.org/News-and-Communications/Pages/default.aspx>

### Important Links to State and Federal Guidance

Important Links and FAQs to CDPH State Guidance	<a href="https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Guidance.aspx">https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Guidance.aspx</a>
2020 CDPH All Facilities Letters (AFLs)	<a href="https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CHCQ/LCP/Pages/LNCAFL20.aspx">https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CHCQ/LCP/Pages/LNCAFL20.aspx</a>
2021 CDPH AFLs	<a href="https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CHCQ/LCP/Pages/LNCAFL21.aspx">https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CHCQ/LCP/Pages/LNCAFL21.aspx</a>
CMS QSO-20-39-NH ( <b>REVISED 11/12/21</b> ): Nursing Home Visitation – COVID-19	<a href="https://www.cms.gov/files/document/qso-20-39-nh-revised.pdf">https://www.cms.gov/files/document/qso-20-39-nh-revised.pdf</a>
AFL 21-49 ( <b>Revised 12/8/21</b> ): Holiday Season COVID-19 Infection Control Recommendations	<a href="https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CHCQ/LCP/Pages/AFL-21-49.aspx">https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CHCQ/LCP/Pages/AFL-21-49.aspx</a>

### Visitation Questions & Answers

**Q-1:** Do unvaccinated children between the ages of 5 and 12 need to show proof of a negative COVID-19 test prior to entry into the SNF?

**A:** Yes. Children should be screened similar to all other visitors prior to entry into the SNF. Since children ages 5 and older are now eligible to get the COVID-19 vaccine, they may provide documentation of their vaccination status for purposes of visitation. Unvaccinated children will need to show proof of a negative test and follow all of the other guidance like other visitors do.

**Q-2:** Can we ask visitors to schedule appointments to visit residents during the holidays?

**A:** A good best practice is to encourage visitors to schedule their visit beforehand so the facility can coordinate visitors and prepare for their arrival, however, if a visitor arrives to the facility and requests to visit a resident, the facility should do what they can to accommodate the visitor. Refusing to allow visitation would misalign with the CMS guidance. Educating visitors on what needs to be done to protect the residents is an approach that taps into the reason why there is the need to coordinate and schedule visits. CDPH is currently working on updating the visitation guidance in AFL 20-22.9 in response to the CMS QSO 20-39.

**Q-3:** The CMS QSO-20-39 visitation memo says, "If the nursing home's county COVID-19 community level of transmission is substantial to high, all residents and visitors, regardless of vaccination status, should wear face coverings or masks and physically distance, at all times." Does this supersede CDPH's recommendation that fully vaccinated resident and fully vaccinated visitors can be without masking or distancing (for indoors and outdoors)?

**A:** This is a good question. In general, the more stringent guidance should be followed. Additionally, we now have local public health and CDPH masking mandates statewide as of December 15, 2021. Local health departments may implement more stringent masking requirements than the state and federal guidance. Facilities should look at their local health department recommendations and degree of community transmission when determining which guidance they are expected to follow.

**Q-4:** Due to the California universal indoor masking mandate, do fully vaccinated visitors and fully vaccinated residents having in room/indoor visitation need to wear masks the whole time now? And if yes, can they still eat with each other since the mask would have to come off?

**A:** There are ongoing conversations about how the new statewide universal mask mandate applies to nursing homes and if there are any special considerations, given that CDPH already has existing requirements around HCP and visitors in nursing homes. Following the statewide guidance, masking should continue for visitors during the indoor visit, with the exception of eating and drinking with their loved one in a designated area. We may follow up with further guidance regarding eating and drinking once we get clarification.

**Q-5:** We have a Christmas Caroling and talent show scheduled prior to the mask mandate. Are the fully vaccinated stage performers, such as singers, required to wear masks? Or can we modify by having them wear a face shield instead of a mask?

**A:** From an infection control and best practice standpoint, we strongly recommend reconsidering having musical performances that involve singing or using instruments in which one would not be able to wear a mask. Consider choosing a safer type of entertainment in which masks can be worn. Modify and choose events based on what would be best for residents and staff safety. Also, for an additional layer of protection, we recommend testing entertainers prior to entering.

## Testing Questions & Answers

**Q-6:** In Los Angeles County from 12/15/21 to 1/31/22, a negative antigen test result taken within 24 hours prior to entry needs to be provided for all visitors prior to entry, regardless of vaccination status. If a visitor brings the antigen test results, how can we confirm that it is really them? Do we need to ask them to take a picture of it with their name, date, and time when they took the test?

**A:** If a home antigen test is used, the recommendation is for them to bring the test with them to the facility and have the test witnessed at the facility. Facilities may offer on-site testing for visitors but are not required to do so.

**Q-7:** What is the guidance regarding expired antigen tests?

**A:** Expired antigen tests can be used provided the state guidance is followed. Guidance on expired tests can be found at:

- CDPH COVID Point of Care Test Expiration Guidance (November 10, 2021)  
<https://testing.covid19.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/332/2021/12/COVID-Point-of-Care-Test-Expiration-Guidance.pdf>
- CMS Guidance for the Use of Expired COVID-19 Tests (see question #27):  
<https://www.cms.gov/files/document/frequently-asked-questions-faqs-clia-guidance-during-covid-19-emergency-updated-12-17-2020.pdf>
- CDC Guidance for the Use of Expired COVID-19 Tests:  
[https://www.cdc.gov/csels/dls/locs/2020/cms\\_guidance\\_for\\_the\\_use\\_of\\_expired\\_sars-cov-2\\_tests.html](https://www.cdc.gov/csels/dls/locs/2020/cms_guidance_for_the_use_of_expired_sars-cov-2_tests.html)

**Q-8:** Labs offer different swab methods for our SNF PCR testing. What is the guidance on swab collecting? Is nasal and oral swabbing both acceptable?

**A:** The test must be conducted following the FDA instructions for use. Please go to the FDA website and look up the test you are using or contact the lab director for your facility. Some tests may allow saliva specimens, some tests require anterior nasal specimens, some tests require nasopharyngeal specimens. If the test requires a nasal specimen, in general both nares should be collected with the same swab.

**Q-9:** Can antigen tests be used for staff and resident response testing?

**A:** Yes, antigen testing can be used for response testing if used at least twice a week, and may be particularly helpful during the initial rounds of response testing to rapidly identify, isolate, and cohort positives; however, during response testing, negative antigen test results may need to be followed by a confirmatory molecular (e.g., PCR) test.

- Consider confirmatory testing for higher risk close contacts (consult with your local health departments)
- One implementation option is to substitute one round of response testing per week with a PCR test.
- <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/CDPH-Guidance-on-the-Use-of-Antigen-Tests-for-Diagnosis-of-Acute-COVID-19.aspx>

## Isolation/Quarantine Questions & Answers

**Q-10:** Can a fully vaccinated COVID positive HCP that had a vaccine breakthrough infection (VBI) be excluded from work for 10 days or is it possible to reduce time to 7 days given some evidence that VBIs clear virus from variants faster?

**A:** No. A COVID positive VBI needs to be excluded from work for 10 just like all other COVID positive individuals. The cases need to be handled the same.

**Q-11:** Where can we find the return-to-work guidance for HCP workers in SNFs?

**A:** AFL 21-08.5 (Updated 10/11/221): Guidance on Quarantine for HCP Exposed to SARS-CoV-2 and Return to Work for HCP with COVID-19  
(<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CHCQ/LCP/Pages/AFL-21-08.aspx>)

## Vaccine Questions & Answers

**Q-12:** When can a recovered person from a vaccine breakthrough infection receive a booster dose?

**A:** COVID recovered individuals can get the vaccine after they have recovered from their illness and have met the criteria for discontinuing isolation. Asymptomatic positive individuals should also wait to get the vaccine until they meet the criteria for discontinuing isolation.

**Q-13:** Why would a recovered person from a vaccine breakthrough infection have to get a booster dose if the vaccine failed her and she got infected?

**A:** The vaccines may not prevent all infections, but they have continued to hold up with robust protection overall. The protection of the vaccine wanes over time, which underlies the key point to get a booster to increase the antibodies in the system. This person should still receive a booster, but would need to wait until the person has recovered from their COVID infection and been released from isolation.

**Q-14:** I have an HCP that has a religious exemption for the COVID-19 vaccine. The HCP expressed they would like to get the Pfizer vaccine recently. If they retract their exemption and get the first dose, do they have to go on leave until they are fully vaccinated?

**A:** While this scenario is not addressed in the order, we do not want anything to stop this HCP from getting vaccinated. The exemption does not need to be formally retracted while the HCP is getting their vaccine, so they can continue working. Continue screening testing twice a week until they meet criteria for fully vaccinated.

**Q-15:** If our SNF has not completed our initial response driven testing during an outbreak, should we postpone our booster clinic? We are worried that our residents with pending positive cases that are getting the booster may interfere with mAb treatment.

**A:** Administering boosters is of top priority, so do not delay your booster clinic during an outbreak. Following administration of the vaccine, if a resident tests positive, you can administer mAb immediately. There would be no reason to delay mAb treatment after administration of the vaccine. However, the CDC recommends that if mAb is given before the vaccine, the administration of the vaccine should be deferred until  $\geq 90$  days after the therapy is completed. This is a precautionary measure, as the mAb treatment may interfere with vaccine-induced immune responses.

## Other Questions & Answers

**Q-16:** Where can I find information about EVUSHELD?

**A:** Information about EVUSHELD can be found at: <https://www.evusheld.com/>.

**Q-17:** How can I register for the California Health Alert Network (CAHAN) notifications?

**A:** CAHAN is CDPH's emergency preparedness notification platform to distribute CDC Health Alerts, CDPH Guidance, and All Facilities Letters. The CAHAN is intended for 2–3 key contacts at each healthcare facility. Interested appropriate parties should complete the **Contact Add Request Form** and return it to their **Local Lead Health Alert Network (HAN) Coordinator**.

- Local Lead HAN Coordinator Directory: <https://member.everbridge.net/892807736722952/faq>
- Contact [CAHANinfo@cdph.ca.gov](mailto:CAHANinfo@cdph.ca.gov) with enrollment issues.