



# Residential Assisted Living Facilities Program Newsletter

May 2020 - COVID-19 Coverage

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## COVID-19/CORONAVIRUS RESOURCES

We have updated the RALF website to include sections (front and center) that contain COVID-19/Coronavirus resources. Here are the resources that are currently available:

- **Idaho's COVID-19 Website**: The official state website related to the COVID-19/Coronavirus pandemic in Idaho, including case statistics and resources.
- **Idaho Rebounds Website (Including Stages of Reopening)**: State website that describes the process for reopening Idaho in the coming months.
- **Guidance for Infection Control and Prevention of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in Residential Assisted Living Facilities**: This is guidance issued by the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare that contains recommendations specific to RALFs. The document also includes links to helpful resources; copies of the guidance could be provided to those looking for more information related to COVID-19 in RALFs.
- **Reducing Risk of Respiratory Illness Clusters and Outbreaks (A Memo From Dr. Christine Hahn, Public Health Medical Director)**: A memo which directs facilities to report clusters of respiratory illness to public health and includes contact information for the health districts as well as Idaho's Epidemiology department.
- **Stop the Spread of Germs Poster**: This is a printable resource that is a quick reference for coronavirus symptoms and prevention instructions.
- **Temporarily-Waived RALF Rules**: List of rules for Idaho RALFs (from IDAPA 16.03.22) that are waived until further notice due to COVID-19.
- **COVID-19: How To Put On and Remove Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) (A World Health Organization (WHO) Training Course)**: Educational video which can be used to train staff how to properly handle personal protective equipment in facilities.
- **IRTS Tracking System for PPE How-To Video**: Informational video (which cannot be opened in Internet Explorer) explaining the process for utilizing the Idaho Resource Tracking System (IRTS) for tracking and obtaining personal protective equipment in facilities. \*\*The daily completion of this tracking system helps ensure PPE is distributed as needed to facilities by local public health districts\*\*
- **Obtaining PPE for Idaho (Survey123 from Idaho Emergency Operations Center (IDEOC))**: This document includes instructions on Survey123, a survey for obtaining and tracking PPE. \*\*The daily completion of this tracking system helps ensure PPE is distributed as needed to Idaho from FEMA.\*\*

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# COVID-19/Coronavirus Resources

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- **Infection Prevention and Control for Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) (A World Health Organization (WHO) Training Course)**: Informational video which can be used to educate staff on infection prevention and control measures during an outbreak in a facility, including COVID-19.
- **Surveillance Tracking (Optional Resource)**: A form that facilities may use to monitor and track confirmed or suspected COVID-19 cases.
- **Communication Plan for Families and Media (Optional Resource)**: Guidance and forms RALFs may find helpful during conversations with family and media, including an example daily situation report, communication log and response responsibility chart.
- **Guidance for Long-Term Care Facilities on Serology Testing (Information from the Idaho Division of Public Health)**: A statement by the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare on the topic of serology (blood) testing for COVID-19.



## COVID-19 TESTING

- **Sunshine Retirement Living Adds Respiratory Infections Testing Including COVID-19 to Strengthen Infection Prevention Protocols (An Article Regarding Testing Through Vikor Scientific)**: Information on COVID-19 testing through Vikor Scientific, a laboratory which provides and processes CDC-approved test tubes and swabs.
- **COVID-19 Test Site Finder**: Information related to coronavirus testing, broken down by state and county.



## PPE VENDORS

- **Idaho PPE Exchange**: Qualified PPE suppliers, verified by the Department of Health and Welfare and Idaho Office of Emergency Management.
- **Free Decontamination of N95 Masks (Battelle Critical Care Decontamination System)**: The Battelle Critical Care Decontamination System allows facilities to reuse N95 masks.

## CDC COVID-19 PREVENTION WEBINAR SERIES

- **Sparkling Surfaces: Stop COVID-19's Spread**: A short, training video on how and when to clean surfaces.
- **Clean Hands - Combat COVID-19**: A short, training video related to how and when to perform hand hygiene.
- **Closely Monitor Residents for COVID-19**: A short, training video related to the need to check residents daily for symptoms of COVID-19 .
- **Keep COVID-19 Out!**: A short, training video to learn more about your role in protecting residents and keeping COVID-19 out of facilities .
- **PPE Lessons**: A short, training video on the proper use of personal protective equipment (PPE) and facemasks.





## Free Decontamination of N95 Masks

FEMA has provided Idaho with an opportunity for providers to preserve and re-use N95 masks. They have contracted with technology created by Battelle called the Critical Care Decontamination System (CCDS). They have located 60 of these systems around the country in 30 states – and one is currently being setup in Idaho Falls. Battelle CCDS uses vaporized hydrogen peroxide to decontaminate an N95 mask, and each mask can be treated up to 20 times with no degradation to the mask's quality. To enroll in the program, visit [www.battelle.org/decon](http://www.battelle.org/decon), click on the "Enroll in Battelle CCDS" button and complete the necessary information.



Battelle recommends facilities bag and label used N95s immediately, even if you are choosing not to recycle/decontaminate at this time. When using the program, due to unknown turnaround times, it is recommended to ship 50% of your contaminated masks at a time to ensure that you still have protection available for your facility staff.

The use of the CCDS system is free for the decontamination of N95 masks for healthcare professionals; however, shipment of PPE to and from the Battelle site could be an expense.

## RALF Coronavirus Guidance Updates

The Guidance for Infection Control and Prevention of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in Residential Assisted Living Facilities was updated on April 10th. Additions to the guidance include the following:



- It is now recommended facilities implement the CMS/Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) "COVID-19 Long-Term Care Facility Guidance, April 2, 2020" with regard to screening, personal protective equipment (PPE), and staffing.
- Every individual (including residents, staff, vendors, etc.) who enters a facility (except EMS responding to an urgent medical need) should be asked about COVID-19 symptoms and have their temperature checked. All accessible entrances should have a screening station.
- Every resident of a facility should be assessed for symptoms and have their temperature checked daily.
- Facilities should reference separate guidance on the [coronavirus.idaho.gov](http://coronavirus.idaho.gov) website regarding screening individuals prior to admission with testing, if available.

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# RALF Coronavirus Guidance Updates

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- When possible and only if tolerated by the resident, all residents, regardless of symptoms, should cover their nose and mouth with a tissue or use a cloth face covering when staff are in their room.
- For the duration of the state of the emergency in Idaho, all facility personnel should wear a facemask while they are in the facility. A medical facemask is preferred. However, if there are no known cases of COVID-19 in the facility, and the mask is therefore being worn by staff for source control only (i.e., to decrease the risk that an asymptomatic staff member will unknowingly transmit the virus to a resident or another staff member), a cloth face covering may be used if medical facemasks are not available. **Importantly, if a facility has a resident with known or suspected COVID-19, a cloth face covering is no longer adequate, and previously issued guidance regarding appropriate PPE should be followed.**
- Assisted living facilities should familiarize themselves with the recommendations found in the CMS/CDC guidance and should comply with those recommendations to every extent possible (see highlight below related to admissions and readmissions).
- If, in consultation with the public health district, facilities do not feel that they can safely keep residents with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 in the facility, and the resident does not require hospital-level care, they may want to contact the RALF Program at the Department of Health and Welfare Division of Licensing and Certification at (208) 364-1962 for information about possible bed availability in other facilities that are able to accept patients with known or suspected COVID-19.
- Facilities that have no known COVID-19+ residents should not accept any new residents who are known to be COVID-19+ and are still on transmission-based precautions. Such individuals can be considered for admission once transmission-based precautions are lifted.

When considering admissions and re-admissions, the CMS guidance, dated April 2, 2020, suggests: "...if possible, isolate all admitted residents (including readmissions) in their room in the COVID-19-positive facility for 14 days if their COVID-19 status is unknown..." The CDC has similar guidance, "Create a plan for managing new admissions and readmissions whose COVID-19 status is unknown. Options may include placing the resident in a single-person room or in a separate observation area so the resident can be monitored for evidence of COVID-19. Residents could be transferred out of the observation area to the main facility if they remain afebrile and without symptoms for 14 days after their exposure (or admission). Testing at the end of this period could be considered to increase certainty that the resident is not infected."



## High-Touch Surfaces

Cleaning, and keeping things clean, requires a lot more work in a healthcare facility than in many other settings; not to mention the need to control the spread of infectious diseases. Between residents, employees and other people in and out of buildings, cleaning can be a never-ending job. When cleaning healthcare facilities, special attention should be given to high-touch surfaces. These types of surfaces include:



- Door handles and knobs
- Bed frames or rails
- Faucets
- Bed tables
- Light switches
- Handrails
- Toilet handles
- Supply carts
- Manual dispensers (soap, sanitizer, etc.)
- Shared electronic equipment (keyboards, phones, etc.)
- Shared ambulatory aids (wheelchairs, walkers, etc.)
- Shared equipment (remote controls, blood pressure cuffs, etc.)
- Shared furniture (chairs, tables, etc.)



For items like staff keyboards, these can be enclosed in plastic (special-made keyboard covers, tablet covers, etc. can be found online) to keep cleaning simple. Alcohol prep pads can be another simple cleaning tool, as they are small and alcohol dries quickly. Alcohol is a perfect way to quickly sanitize a phone, for example.

Thank you all for everything you are doing to keep the assisted living community healthy and safe!



**IDAHO COVID-19 HOTLINE**  
NOW AVAILABLE

**1-888-330-3010**  
Monday - Friday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

For more information, visit: [coronavirus.idaho.gov](https://coronavirus.idaho.gov)





# Stages of Reopening

Each stage has specific criteria (for details visit [rebound.idaho.gov](https://rebound.idaho.gov)), which are evaluated every 2 weeks to determine feasibility to advance from one stage to the next. All criteria must be met to move to the next stage.

**It is important to note, throughout all four stages everyone must continue to:**

- Engage in physical distancing of at least six feet
- Wear face coverings in public places
- Stay home if sick
- Practice good hand hygiene
- Cover coughs and sneezes
- Disinfect surfaces and objects regularly



**Throughout all four stages, employers must:**

- Maintain the six-foot physical distancing requirements for all
- Provide adequate sanitation and personal hygiene for employees, vendors, etc.
- Ensure frequent disinfection of the business as well as regular cleaning, especially of high-touch surfaces
- Identify how personal use items such as masks, face coverings, and gloves may be required by employees, vendors, etc.
- Provide services while limiting close interactions with others
- Restrict non-essential business travel
- Identify strategies for addressing ill employees, which should include requiring COVID-19 positive employees to stay at home while infectious, and may include keeping employees who were directly exposed to the COVID-19 positive employee away from the workplace, and the closure of the business until the location can be properly disinfected
- On a case-by-case basis, include other practices appropriate for specific types of businesses, such as screening of employees for illness and exposures upon work entry, requiring non-cash transactions, etc.



We are now in Stage Two, which means with adherence to strict physical distancing, sanitation protocol and any CDC guidance, the following:

- Gatherings of less than 10 people, both public and private, can occur
- Restaurant dining rooms can re-open with plans approved by local health districts
- Indoor gyms and recreational facilities can open
- Free-standing hair salons can open



At this point, only vulnerable adults are required to continue to self-quarantine. However, teleworking should continue where possible and non-essential travel should be avoided. Those returning from states with prevalent community spread are required to self-quarantine for 14 days upon re-entering Idaho.

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## Stages of Reopening

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Those who interact with vulnerable adults should be aware that by returning to environments where distancing is not always possible, they could carry the virus back to vulnerable residents.

When we move to Stage Three (estimated to begin May 30th), with adherence to guidance:

- Gatherings of less than 50 people, both public and private, can occur
- Non-essential travel may resume to allowed areas without coronavirus
- Bars may open

When we move to Stage Four (estimated to begin June 13th):

- Self-quarantine is no longer required, minimize exposure to social settings where distancing may not be practical
- Employees may return to on-site work
- Visits to senior living facilities and congregate facilities (e.g. jails) can resume with diligent hygiene and distancing
- Gatherings of any size may occur
- Large venues (e.g. movie theaters) may open with approved plans
- Non-essential travel remains limited to areas where visitors are permitted and ongoing transmission does not exist

In summary, vulnerable adults should continue to quarantine until Stage 3 (estimated May 30th) and visits to assisted living facilities may not resume until Stage 4 (estimated June 13th). At this time, social distancing is not planned to be removed – please keep this in mind for congregate areas.



## Twin Falls Manor

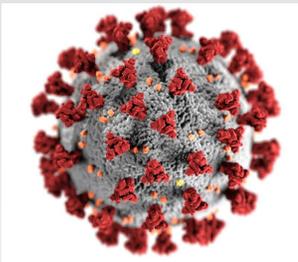
Twin Falls Manor, located at 491 Caswell Ave W, Twin Falls, is currently functioning as a COVID-19 Care Community. The facility is specializing in assisted living care for those impacted by COVID-19.

For admissions information, contact Erin Wilkins at (208) 749-0717. For general inquiries, the phone number for Twin Falls Manor is (208) 734-6062 and the fax number is (208) 600-6887.





## Local News



- 4/15/20 [Eagle] [Son of Twin Falls Woman Who Died of COVID-19 Shares His Experience](#) - "Long-time Twin Falls resident Kelly Yost Hove passed away from COVID-19 complications early Easter morning, at the age of 79. KMVT spoke with her son on Tuesday, as he described the difficulties of saying goodbye to a loved one for the last time over the phone."
- 4/16/20 [Twin Falls] [Volunteers Singing Outside Assisted Living Facilities to Bring Residents Cheer](#) - "You can see the tears flowing, because they're just so happy that we're there...When we're standing outside of a building, we're 15-20 feet away in most cases. In some cases, places we've been they're up on the balcony, so they're quite a distance away."
- 5/3/20 ['We're Putting Other People at Risk.' Coronavirus Deaths Mount at Idaho Care Facilities](#) - "Within a month and a half of Idaho's first reported COVID-19 case on March 13, the virus had struck 16 nursing homes, assisted living facilities and group homes across the state. It infected 150 people who lived and worked at those facilities."
- 5/4/20 [Boise] [Boise Girl Delivers Hundreds of Cards to Nursing Homes](#) - "Residents at these facilities tend to be among the most vulnerable when it comes to COVID-19. Due to social distancing rules, many of them are struggling with loneliness during the ongoing quarantine."
- 5/7/20 [Lewiston] [Lack of Testing, Transparency in North Idaho Nursing Home with COVID-19 Deaths, Families Say](#) - "The Life Care Center of Lewiston said in a statement on April 17 that it wasn't able to test all patients who were symptomatic because of limited tests."
- 5/9/20 [Boise] [Infection Control Violations Common at Idaho Nursing Homes Prior to COVID-19](#) - "Infection control violations are the most common citations in nursing homes around the country."
- 5/9/20 [Boise] [Official: 18 Residents of Life Care Have Died of COVID-19](#) - "All but one of the COVID-19 deaths in Nez Perce County, and nearly all deaths attributed to the illness in the Lewiston-Clarkston Valley, are linked to an outbreak at Life Care Center of Lewiston."
- 5/12/20 [Twin Falls] [Long-Term Care Facility in Twin Falls Now Caring Exclusively for Coronavirus Patients](#) - "The center is essentially acting as its own quarantine unit. If a resident in a long-term care facility in the region tests positive for COVID-19, they can be transferred to the center."



## National News



- 4/15/20 [CDC Estimates More Than 9,200 Health Care Workers Have Been Infected with COVID-19](#) - "55% reported having contact with a Covid-19 patient in the healthcare setting within the 14 days before becoming ill, 27% had contact with someone who had coronavirus at home and 13% had contact in the community."
- 4/16/20 [New Jersey] [New Jersey AG Opens Probe of Nursing Home Deaths After Finding 17 Bodies in Facility Hit By Coronavirus](#) - "New Jersey has opened an investigation into nursing home deaths across the state after officials discovered 17 bodies piled into a makeshift morgue and more than 100 residents infected with Covid-19 at a long-term care facility..."
- 4/17/20 [Kansas] [Better Business Bureau Hosts Concerts For Assisted Living Homes](#) - "The Better Business Bureau (BBB) hosted courtyard concerts for the residents of assisted living homes in Wichita Falls on Wednesday. The goal was to brighten up the day of those who aren't able to see friends and family as we continue to practice social distancing...[and] it's their way of showing appreciation for hardworking caregivers."
- 4/23/20 [Nursing Homes Ask States For Immunity From Civil Suits Amid COVID-19](#) - "...health care facilities need immunity from civil suits, in part, because of the shortage of testing and personal protective equipment (PPE)."
- 4/25/20 [New York] [Coronavirus Spreads in a New York Nursing Home Forced to Take Recovering Patients](#) - "'Sending hospitalized patients who are likely harboring the virus to nursing homes that do not have the appropriate units, equipment and staff to accept COVID-19 patients is a recipe for disaster...'"
- 4/27/20 [Minnesota] [Coronavirus in Minnesota: Wayzata Assisted Living Facility to Permanently Close After Deadly Outbreak](#) - "The nonprofit organization Transforming Age said it has made 'the difficult decision' not to reopen Meridian Manor in Wayzata 'as a result of multiple negative impacts of COVID-19.'"
- 4/28/20 [Massachusetts] ['Its Horrific': Coronavirus Kills Nearly 70 at Massachusetts Veterans' Home](#) - "Because staffing was so tight, workers from one unit were constantly moving to others to help out – and bringing their germs with them, she said. At one point, a unit was shut down because there wasn't enough staff to operate it, and those veterans were moved into close quarters in other parts of the building..."

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## National News

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- 5/1/20 [‘Our Patients are Dropping Like Flies’: 16,000 Dead from COVID-19 in U.S. Nursing Homes](#) - “More than 2 million Americans live in long-term care settings, including the nation’s approximately 15,600 federally-regulated nursing homes and 28,900 assisted living facilities, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.”
- 5/4/20 [Coronavirus Causes Damaging Blood Clots From Brain to Toes](#) - “Doctors around the world are noting a raft of clotting-related disorders - from benign skin lesions on the feet sometimes called “Covid toe” to life-threatening strokes and blood-vessel blockages.”
- 5/8/20 [‘I’m Never Going to Be the Same’: Medics Grapple with Mental Trauma on COVID-19 Front Line](#) - “Her colleagues are jittery and easily irritated...One described having heart palpitations on a recent shift. Another has taken disability leave from their facility, unable to work because of panic attacks and grief after losing several patients she loved.”
- 5/11/20 [Connecticut] [How 3 Senior Living Providers ‘Bubbled’ Communities By Having Staff Live On Site](#) - “In total, 17 employees have moved into or next door to Shady Oaks, at a cost of \$40,000 per month. [The facility owner] Belanger is footing the bill from his personal savings...”
- 5/13/20 [North Carolina] [Families Parade Around Deerfield Ridge Assisted Living to Connect with Loved Ones](#) - “Families have come to visit loved ones outside of their windows, dropped off packages at the facility and staff members try to assist residents weekly with FaceTime calls to relatives...”
- 5/14/20 [Washington] [Murano Senior Living: Putting the Social in Social Distancing](#) - “...the community uses online video chat to share favorite jokes, memories, and life stories. Residents also tune in to Murano’s state-of-the-art kitchen to watch the chef prepare delicious meals before sampling the meals as they are delivered to their doors.”
- 5/14/20 [Connecticut] [Coronavirus Claims 276 Lives in CT Assisted Living Facilities](#) - “The state doesn’t regulate assisted living facilities; it regulates the agencies that provide medical services to residents of these managed-care communities.”





## Ventilation

Ventilation is very important for healthcare facilities. As it warms up, and as we continue to try and control infectious diseases, consider the following:

- Keeping windows open when comfortable
- Placing fans in windows to increase the circulation of fresh air
- Using air purifiers, such as HEPA, ULPA or ionic

### RALF Program Contact Information

- Phone:  
(208) 364-1962
- Email:  
[RALF@dhw.idaho.gov](mailto:RALF@dhw.idaho.gov)
- Websites:  
[www.assistedliving.dhw.idaho.gov](http://www.assistedliving.dhw.idaho.gov)



[www.flareslive.com/  
portal/  
ProviderLogin.aspx](http://www.flareslive.com/portal/ProviderLogin.aspx)



Images from Idaho DHW, CDC,  
Pexels and Pixabay

## Protecting Assisted Living Staff

During this time, some retailers have gone a step further to protect our elderly and disabled populations – such as Costco offering early shopping to only those individuals. However, what about the providers? The administrators, the nurses, the staff, etc. who appear younger and healthier, but interact with those populations every day? How do we take extra precautions to protect those people? Just one idea: create bright or bold “signage” for assisted living employees to wear in public. This could be a sticker, a “necklace,” something like an employee badge or even a custom t-shirt or face mask. You want it to be readable enough to be seen from a good distance (>6 feet).

Suggestions for wording include:

- “I’m a frontline hero. Please give me 6 feet.”
- “I care for our elderly. Please stay >6 feet away.”
- “Stay healthy. Stay 6 feet apart.”
- “Please stay 6 feet away for social distancing.”
- “Healthcare workers are heroes. Please provide me 6 feet of space.”
- “Keep calm and stay 6 feet away.”

## A Quote for Quarantine

“If we’re all alone, then we’re all together in that too.”

Kathy Bates as Patricia  
P.S. I Love You (2007)