



Statement on the Reopening of Post-Acute & Long-Term Care Facilities

As states and local communities begin to reopen their retail stores, restaurants, offices, and other businesses, residents and employees of post-acute and long-term care facilities, along with their families, will wonder when they too will be able to end no-visitor policies, dine together again, and enjoy group activities and routine visits to the salon.

Residents of post-acute and long-term care (PALTC) facilities remain the most vulnerable population during this ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. While some areas in the country have seen a decline in hospital admissions and deaths from COVID-19, other areas continue to see a rise in cases, hospitalizations and deaths within PALTC. Of all deaths reported in the U.S., estimates suggest that some 40% to 56% are nursing home related.

Infectious disease experts warn that the country will experience a second wave of the virus this fall and it is unclear yet if we will be fully prepared for it. In addition, widespread, reliable testing is still not a reality for many PALTC communities, nor is a consistent supply of personal protective equipment for healthcare workers in long term care.

Given these factors, the decision to reopen or to relax social distancing efforts within PALTC communities must be made with great caution and on an individual basis, regardless of the status of the surrounding community. This critical decision rests with the people most familiar with residents, staff and resources—the clinical leaders managing the care of the patients and residents in these facilities. Medical directors, executive directors and directors of nursing, along with their regional leadership, should work in collaboration with their local health departments and hospital systems to determine the appropriate time to reopen their nursing homes and assisted living communities to visitors, to relax social distancing policies and personal protective equipment requirements.

Finally, we urge federal, state and local governments and health authorities to stipulate that, in the chain of events leading to reopening businesses and buildings, that PALTC facilities, where older adults most at risk of serious illness or death from COVID-19 reside, be the last to open to visitors and outside contractors and vendors.