Transcript: Changes to COVID-19 Reporting in Congregate Care Settings

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Good afternoon. My name is Lexie Barber. I am an epidemiologist with the Long-term COVID-19 Surveillance Unit at the Minnesota Department of Health, or MDH, and today we will be going over changes to COVID-19 reporting in congregate care settings.

First, we will go through overall changes.

Skilled nursing facilities, which are already reporting aggregate case counts weekly to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s National Healthcare Safety Network, or NHSN, will no longer need to report individual cases to MDH. Skilled nursing facilities must continue to report total case counts in residents and staff to NHSN, per guidance from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, or CMS.

Assisted living facilities will no longer be required to report individual cases to MDH, but will instead be required to report a total number of resident cases in the facility per week and a total number of staff cases in the facility per week.

These changes will be reflected on the reporting tool starting July 13, 2022.

There will be no changes to the current death reporting. Both skilled nursing facilities and assisted living facilities must still report all deaths in residents who have previously tested positive for COVID-19 to MDH. There will be no changes to the current lab reporting. Facilities conducting point-of-care testing still need to report positive lab results separately, to either MDH RePortal or to NHSN, per requirements of Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments, or CLIA.

Skilled nursing facilities will continue to report aggregate case counts through NHSN and will no longer need to additionally report cases to MDH. Skilled nursing facilities that are conducting point-of-care COVID-19 testing at the facility will still be required to report positive results separately, through either MDH RePortal or NHSN, and will still be required to report to MDH any deaths in residents who have previously tested positive for COVID-19.

Assisted living facilities and other MDH-licensed facilities will no longer be required to report individual level information for all cases. Assisted-living facilities will be required to report a total number of cases in residents per week and a total number of cases in staff per week. These counts must be reported through the COVID-19 long-term care online reporting form. Facilities should choose one day of the week and consistently report the total number of cases from the previous week on that day, even if they have had no cases. Reporting when there are zero cases in the facility is important, so MDH is aware of case activity in long-term care facilities. Individual level information on cases, except for deaths, will no longer need to be reported to MDH by facilities. Facilities are still required to report positive point-of-care test results to MDH RePortal and assisted-living facilities are still required to report deaths in residents who have previously tested positive for COVID-19 to MDH, with the same level of information that is currently required. Nothing has changed regarding death or point-of-care results reporting.
For timing of reporting, skilled nursing facilities should continue to report through NHSN as they are doing now. They must continue to report deaths to MDH within one business day. Assisted-living facilities should report to MDH on a weekly basis. Select a day of the week to report each week on the number of cases in the previous week. Previous weeks that need updating can be done at this time as well. Deaths should continue to be reported within one business day.

Facilities that are licensed only by DHS have slightly different reporting methods. Facilities with 30 or more beds should report to MDH their total weekly case counts in residents and in staff, but only if there are cases in the facility. DHS-only licensed facilities with 30 or more beds do not need to report to MDH when there are no cases in the facility. DHS-only licensed facilities with fewer than 30 beds, such as smaller group homes, do not need to report case counts; however, they need to notify MDH when there is an outbreak in the facility. COVID-19 death reporting has not changed. All individual residents who have passed away after testing positive for COVID-19 must be reported to MDH. And DHS facilities that are conducting their own point-of-care COVID-19 testing must report those positive results to MDH through RePortal, as required by CLIA. One additional note, some facilities are licensed by both MDH and DHS. These facilities should report as an MDH-licensed facility.

For all facilities, regardless of type, there are no changes to the current reporting for resident deaths. All deaths in residents who have previously tested positive for COVID-19 must be reported to MDH. This should be done using the same reporting link and within one business day.

There are also no changes to the current laboratory reporting. Facilities conducting point-of-care testing are acting as a laboratory, and therefore under CLIA are required to report positive SARS-CoV-2 tests results. These can be reported through NHSN or through MDH via RePortal. This is not a change from current reporting. The federal government discontinued reporting of negative results in April 2022.

Now we will go through how to report aggregate counts of COVID-19 cases to MDH. Again – if you are reporting aggregate counts to NHSN, you do not need to report them through MDH.

There will be one link facilities will use to report both aggregate counts and deaths. This link has been updated from the previous online reporting form link, but you will still be able to get there from the old link. Please update your bookmarks.

Once you click on the link, you will fill in contact and facility information and then select that you are reporting case counts.

After you have selected case counts, a box will appear with a list of weeks, running Sunday through Saturday. Select the weeks for which you would like to report case counts. Once you have clicked the box to the left of the week, a text box will appear to the right, where you will be able to enter the number of cases for that week.

Select whichever weeks’ cases need to be reported. You do not need to report cases for a week more than once, so in this example, if you have already reported the total number of cases for May 8 through May 14, you would not need to select and enter a number for this week. If, however, you reported that you only had one case for the week of May 15 through May 21, and you realized the next week that you actually had two cases that week, you would select that week and enter the numeral 2 in the text box. This will overwrite whatever numeral you previously entered.

Again, you do not need to reenter total case counts for a week. Enter only counts for weeks that haven’t been reported or that need to be updated. Use the specimen collection date to determine in which week a case belongs. A week runs Sunday through Saturday. If a person has two positive tests, for example a rapid positive followed by a PCR positive the next day, use the earliest specimen collection date to determine in which week they belong.
You should include all positive tests from any FDA-approved diagnostic test for COVID-19. Include Nucleic Acid Amplification tests (NAAT), PCR, point-of-care antigen or molecular, or at-home or over-the-counter tests. Include cases regardless of where testing was done, including at the facility or at a health care provider’s office, and from staff or residents who tested themselves in their homes or resident apartments. If you have a separate, unlicensed, apartment building with independent residents, these residents should not be included in your total case counts.

Residents should be included in total case counts if they were in the facility while infectious and not under transmission-based precautions during the entire infectious period. The infectious period for Covid-19 is two days before symptoms start through 10 days after symptoms started, or two days before the test date through 10 days after the test date if there were no symptoms.

After entering resident case counts, you will do the same for staff. One thing I want to point out here is that staff should be included only if they worked or spent time in the facility while infectious.

Enter case counts of staff by week, as you would for residents.

Staff should be included if they spent time or interacted with others in the facility while infectious. Staff should be included regardless of whether they are fulltime, parttime, or in a contract staff position.

MDH licensed facilities need to report weekly, regardless of whether there are cases in the facility. We will go through how to quickly report that now.

Using the same link, enter your contact info; your facility; select “no cases to report”; and click “submit.” This will send us a note that you have no cases in your facility.

In conclusion, skilled nursing facilities will continue to report case counts in residents and staff to NHSN, but will no longer need to report those cases to MDH. Assisted living facilities and other facilities licensed by MDH will once a week need to report to MDH the total weekly case counts in residents and in staff, but will not need to report case-specific information. DHS-licensed facilities will need to report to MDH only when they are experiencing cases.

All facility types are still required to report to MDH within one business day all deaths in residents who have previously tested positive for COVID-19. All facilities that are conducting point-of-care testing at their facility are required to report positive lab results to either NHSN or MDH through RePortal.

It is anticipated that these changes will go into effect on July 13, 2022. If you have questions about these COVID-19 reporting changes, please send them to the MDH long-term care inbox at Health.LTC.COVID19.MDH@state.mn.us.

Here are all the links needed for the different reporting types.

- Link for reporting case counts, deaths, and outbreaks to MDH: COVID-19 Long-Term Care Report Form (https://redcap-c19.web.health.state.mn.us/redcap/surveys/?s=HH47NMERJHJX7CJF)
- Information on case and lab reporting through NHSN: CDC: LTCF COVID-19 Module (https://www.cdc.gov/nhsn/ltc/covid19/index.html)
- Information on lab reporting through MDH RePortal: Uploading Lab Results to MDH RePortal (https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hcp/reportal.html)

Thank you!