



DHS-Licensed Congregate Care Critical Needs Process

The Department of Human Services (DHS) recognizes that this is a frightening time for many of our DHS-licensed congregate care facilities. If used appropriately, personal protective equipment (PPE) can help protect against the spread of COVID-19. Information contained in this guidance is only for congregate care settings licensed by the Office of Long-Term Living, Bureau of Human Services Licensing (BHSL) and not for other provider types.

The Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH) has requested that all critical needs for BHSL licensed facilities are first screened by BHSL to ensure that facilities are adhering to current guidance and PPE conservation strategies before forwarding to DOH. DOH has a very limited supply of PPE and is triaging needs daily.

Requests for support, including PPE, may come directly from providers, staff from the program offices (who may talk to the providers directly to help fill out the forms), or from health care systems that are helping some congregate care facilities as part of the Educational Support and Clinical Coaching Program (ESCCP).

Critical PPE Needs Process

- 1) BHSL is available to assist licensed congregate care settings as able and identify additional support that licensed congregate care settings require. As part of this, licensed congregate care settings may fill out the attached “Critical PPE Needs Assessment Questionnaire v.3 4.21” form and send it as an attachment to rapwarlheadquarters@pa.gov to notify BHSL of a critical PPE need.
- 2) BHSL program staff will review the Critical PPE Needs Assessment Questionnaire and make sure it satisfies the most current definition of critical need. These criteria are subject to change. As of 4/24/2020, this is defined as:
 - a. At least one confirmed positive case of COVID 19
 - b. 5 days or less of PPE on hand
- 3) If the criteria for a critical need are satisfied, BHSL staff will forward the completed Critical PPE Needs Assessment Questionnaire form to PA DOH.
- 4) BHSL will send an approval or denial notice to providers once a decision has been made by PA DOH. If approved, providers will receive information of expected delivery timeframe.



General support given limited supply of PPE

PPE resources are very limited. Providers should be encouraged to continue to try to source PPE equipment from their suppliers, local businesses (see the Business-2-Business Interchange directory [here](#)), and utilize cloth masks where appropriate. DHS-licensed facilities are encouraged to review [CDC guidance on strategies to optimize the supply of PPE and equipment](#).

For additional information on when it is appropriate to use PPE, please see DOH guidance on [universal masking](#) and also CDC guidance on [infection prevention in health care settings](#).

DOH has highlighted guidance related to the prioritization of isolation gown use. This has been one of our most frequently requested supplies and DOH has found high burn rates through phone consultations by unnecessary use of gowns.

Gowns should be prioritized for the following activities:

- During care activities where splashes and sprays are anticipated, which typically includes aerosol generating procedures; and
- During the following high-contact patient care activities that provide opportunities for transfer of pathogens to the hands and clothing of healthcare providers, such as: dressing; bathing/showering; transferring; providing hygiene; changing linens; changing briefs or assisting with toileting; device care or use and wound care.

Congregate care facilities that are being supported by the Educational Support and Clinical Coaching Program (ESCCP), should be referred to the health system in their area for additional information on how to manage infection control with limited PPE supply.

Questions about this announcement can be directed to Jordan Kembel at jorkembel@pa.gov.

As COVID-19 is a rapidly evolving situation, any guidance regarding PPE requests is subject to change. Please check the Pennsylvania Department of Health [website](#) for updates and additional information.