

WSR 21-20-134
EMERGENCY RULES
DEPARTMENT OF
SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES

[Filed October 6, 2021, 10:15 a.m., effective October 12, 2021]

Effective Date of Rule: October 12, 2021.

Purpose: The department is extending the amendment of the rules listed below to assure [ensure] nursing homes are not significantly impeded from admitting and caring for residents during the COVID-19 epidemic. These amendments align state nursing home rules with federal rules that were suspended or amended to help facilitate care during the COVID-19 pandemic.

(1) The federal rules related to quality assurance activities were amended to narrow the scope of the quality assurance program to reviewing and taking action on adverse events and infection control. Current state rules require the nursing facility to identify issues that may adversely affect residents, including resident input from grievances. The state amendment continues to require quality assurance activities, but mandatory review in quality assurance would be limited to adverse events and infection control.

(2) The federal rules suspended fire drills to reduce grouping of staff and/or residents that might increase the likelihood of transmitting COVID-19. Current state rules require periodic fire drills. The state amendment removes the requirement to have fire drills, but continues to require staff training on the fire plan.

(3) The federal rules requiring a window in each resident room were waived to permit use of space not normally used for resident care to be utilized as a resident room. Current state rules require each resident room have a transparent glass window located on an exterior wall, with additional size and location requirements for new construction. The state amendment removes the requirement to have a window in each resident room.

The department filed a CR-101 preproposal under WSR 20-21-034. In addition, under the rule development phase of permanent rule making, the department is in discussions with stakeholders about amending the rules to explain the circumstances and time periods under which suspension of rules due to COVID[-19] is necessary.

Citation of Rules Affected by this Order: Amending WAC 388-97-1740, 388-97-1760, and 388-97-2400.

Statutory Authority for Adoption: RCW 74.42.620 and 18.51.070.

Under RCW 34.05.350 the agency for good cause finds that immediate adoption, amendment, or repeal of a rule is necessary for the preservation of the public health, safety, or general welfare, and that observing the time requirements of notice and opportunity to comment upon adoption of a permanent rule would be contrary to the public interest.

Reasons for this Finding: The threat of COVID-19 to our most vulnerable populations is significant, especially for those receiving long-term care services in their homes and congregate settings, such as long-term care facilities.

Fire Drills (WAC 388-97-1740): Recent federal waivers suspended the requirement for nursing facilities to conduct fire drills. The majority of the rules around fire drills are in the federal life safety code, and under the jurisdiction of the office of the state fire marshal. Nursing home rules also contain language requiring periodic drills. Amendment of WAC 388-97-1740 remove the requirement for con-

ducting periodic fire drills, but does not remove the requirement to have an emergency plan that includes fire procedures and staff training on that plan.

Quality Assessment and Assurance (WAC 388-97-1760): Current nursing home rules require facilities to maintain a process for quality assurance that seeks out and incorporates input from resident and family groups, and individual residents. The rule also requires review of grievances and expressed concerns. The amended rule requires facilities to seek out and incorporate resident and resident representative input, but removes the reference to resident or family groups, as those groups are not currently permitted to meet. The amendment also sets a standard that, at a minimum, requires review of adverse events and infection control. These changes continue to permit facilities to focus quality assurance efforts on issues that will assist them in managing COVID-19, and align the state rule with federal waivers related to quality assurance.

Windows in Resident Rooms (WAC 388-97-2400): Current state nursing home rules require each resident room have a transparent glass window on an exterior wall. Federal rules also require a resident sleeping room to have a window. The federal rules were recently waived to accommodate facilities wanting to increase room capacity, and need to utilize spaces not normally used as a resident room as a resident room. Amendment of WAC 388-97-2400 removes the requirement to have a window in each resident room to align the state rule with the recently waived federal rule. This will continue to provide nursing facilities with additional flexibility in redesigning their space to accommodate additional residents.

Number of Sections Adopted in Order to Comply with Federal Statute: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0; Federal Rules or Standards: New 0, Amended 3, Repealed 0; or Recently Enacted State Statutes: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0.

Number of Sections Adopted at the Request of a Nongovernmental Entity: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0.

Number of Sections Adopted on the Agency's own Initiative: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0.

Number of Sections Adopted in Order to Clarify, Streamline, or Reform Agency Procedures: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0.

Number of Sections Adopted using Negotiated Rule Making: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0; Pilot Rule Making: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0; or Other Alternative Rule Making: New 0, Amended 3, Repealed 0.

Date Adopted: October 5, 2021.

Katherine I. Vasquez
Rules Coordinator

SHS-4816.2

AMENDATORY SECTION (Amending WSR 08-20-062, filed 9/24/08, effective 11/1/08)

WAC 388-97-1740 Disaster and emergency preparedness. (1) The nursing home must develop and implement detailed written plans and

procedures to meet potential emergencies and disasters. At a minimum the nursing home must ensure these plans provide for:

- (a) Fire or smoke;
- (b) Severe weather;
- (c) Loss of power;
- (d) Earthquake;
- (e) Explosion;
- (f) Missing resident, elopement;
- (g) Loss of normal water supply;
- (h) Bomb threats;
- (i) Armed individuals;
- (j) Gas leak, or loss of service; and
- (k) Loss of heat supply.

(2) The nursing home must train all employees in emergency procedures when they begin work in the nursing home, and periodically re-view emergency procedures with existing staff (~~(, and carry out unannounced staff drills using those procedures)~~).

(3) The nursing home must ensure emergency plans:

- (a) Are developed and maintained with the assistance of qualified fire, safety, and other appropriate experts as necessary;
- (b) Are reviewed annually; and
- (c) Include evacuation routes prominently posted on each unit.

[Statutory Authority: Chapters 18.51 and 74.42 RCW and 42 C.F.R. 489.52. WSR 08-20-062, § 388-97-1740, filed 9/24/08, effective 11/1/08.]

AMENDATORY SECTION (Amending WSR 08-20-062, filed 9/24/08, effective 11/1/08)

WAC 388-97-1760 Quality assessment and assurance. (1) The nursing home must maintain a process for quality assessment and assurance. The department may not require disclosure of the records of the quality assessment and assurance committee except in so far as such disclosure is related to ensuring compliance with the requirements of this section.

(2) The nursing home must ensure the quality assessment and assurance process:

(a) Seeks out and incorporates input from the (~~(resident and family councils, if any, or individual)~~) residents and (~~(support groups)~~) resident representatives; and

(b) At a minimum, reviews (~~(expressed concerns and grievances)~~) adverse events and infection control.

[Statutory Authority: Chapters 18.51 and 74.42 RCW and 42 C.F.R. 489.52. WSR 08-20-062, § 388-97-1760, filed 9/24/08, effective 11/1/08.]

AMENDATORY SECTION (Amending WSR 08-20-062, filed 9/24/08, effective 11/1/08)

WAC 388-97-2400 Resident rooms. (1) The nursing home must ensure that each resident bedroom:

- (a) Has direct access to a hall or corridor; and
- (b) ~~((Is located on an exterior wall with a transparent glass window; and~~
- ~~(c))~~ Is located to prevent through traffic.
- (2) **In a new building or addition, unless otherwise necessary for infection control,** each resident bedroom must:
 - (a) Have an exterior transparent glass window:
 - (i) With an area equal to at least one-tenth of the bedroom usable floor area;
 - (ii) Located twenty-four feet or more from another building or the opposite wall of a court, or ten feet or more away from a property line, except on street sides;
 - (iii) Located eight feet or more from any exterior walkway, paved surface, or driveway; and
 - (iv) With a sill three feet or less above the floor.
 - (b) Be located on a floor level at or above grade level except for earth berms. "Grade" means the level of ground adjacent to the building floor level measured at the required exterior window. The ground must be level or slope downward for a distance of at least ten feet from the wall of the building. From there the ground may slope upward to the maximum sill height of the required window at a rate of one foot vertical for two feet horizontal.

[Statutory Authority: Chapters 18.51 and 74.42 RCW and 42 C.F.R. 489.52. WSR 08-20-062, § 388-97-2400, filed 9/24/08, effective 11/1/08.]