

TITLE 26 HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
PART 1 HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
CHAPTER 551 INTERMEDIATE CARE FACILITIES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH AN
INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY OR RELATED CONDITIONS
SUBCHAPTER C STANDARDS FOR LICENSURE

EMERGENCY RULE ADOPTION PREAMBLE

The Executive Commissioner of the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) adopts on an emergency basis in Title 26, Part 1, Texas Administrative Code, Chapter 551, Subchapter C, new §551.46, concerning an emergency rule to mitigate and contain COVID-19 in an intermediate care facility for individuals with an intellectual disability (ICF/IID) or related condition. As authorized by Texas Government Code §2001.034, HHSC may adopt an emergency rule without prior notice or hearing upon finding that an imminent peril to the public health, safety, or welfare requires adoption on fewer than 30 days' notice. Emergency rules adopted under Texas Government Code §2001.034 may be effective for not longer than 120 days and may be renewed for not longer than 60 days.

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The purpose of this emergency rulemaking is to support the Governor's March 13, 2020 proclamation certifying that the COVID-19 virus poses an imminent threat of disaster in the state and declaring a state of disaster for all counties in Texas. In this proclamation, the Governor authorized the use of all available resources of state government and of political subdivisions that are reasonably necessary to cope with this disaster and directed that government entities and businesses would continue providing essential services. HHSC accordingly finds that an imminent peril to the public health, safety, and welfare of the state requires immediate adoption of this emergency rule for ICF/IID Provider Response to COVID-19 – Mitigation.

To protect individuals receiving ICF/IID services and the public health, safety, and welfare of the state during the COVID-19 pandemic, HHSC is adopting an emergency rule to mitigate and contain COVID-19. The purpose of the new rule is to describe requirements for ICF/IID Provider Response to COVID-19.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY

The emergency rulemaking is adopted under Texas Government Code §2001.034 and §531.0055 and Texas Health and Safety Code §§252.031 - 252.033 and §242.043. Texas Government Code §2001.034 authorizes the adoption of emergency rules without prior notice and hearing, if an agency finds that an imminent peril to the public health, safety, or welfare requires adoption of a rule on fewer than 30 days' notice. Texas Government Code §531.0055 authorizes the Executive Commissioner of HHSC to adopt rules and policies necessary for the operation and provision of health and human services by the health and human services system. Texas Health and Safety Code §§252.031 - 252.033 require the Executive Commissioner of HHSC to establish rules prescribing the minimum

standards and process for licensure as an intermediate care facility. Texas Health and Safety Code §252.043 establishes HHSC's authority to conduct an inspection, survey, or investigation at an intermediate care facility to determine if the intermediate care facility is in compliance with the minimum acceptable levels of care for individuals who are living in an intermediate care facility, and the minimum acceptable life safety code and physical environment requirements.

The new rule implements Texas Government Code §531.0055 and §531.021 and Texas Human Resources Code §32.021.

The agency hereby certifies that the emergency adoption has been reviewed by legal counsel and found to be a valid exercise of the agency's legal authority.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For further information, please call: (512) 438-3161.

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§551.46. ICF/IID Provider Response to COVID-19 – Mitigation.

(a) The following words and terms, when used in this section, have the following meanings.

(1) Cohort--A group of individuals placed in rooms, halls, or sections of an intermediate care facility with others who have the same COVID-19 status or the act of grouping individuals with other individuals who have the same COVID-19 status.

(2) COVID-19 negative--A person who has tested negative for COVID-19, is not exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19, and has had no known exposure to the virus since the negative test.

(3) COVID-19 positive--A person who has tested positive for COVID-19 and does not yet meet Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance for the discontinuation of transmission-based precautions.

(4) COVID-19 status--The status of a person based on COVID-19 test results, symptoms, or other factors that consider the person's potential for having the virus.

(5) Fully vaccinated person--A person who received the second dose in a two-dose series or a single dose of a one dose COVID-19 vaccine and 14 days have passed since this dose was received.

(6) Individual--A person enrolled in the ICF/IID Program.

(7) Isolation--The separation of people who have a COVID-19 positive status from those who have a COVID-19 negative status and those whose COVID-19 status is unknown.

(8) PPE--Personal protective equipment means specialized clothing or equipment worn by intermediate care facility staff for protection against transmission of infectious diseases such as COVID-19, including masks, goggles, face shields, gloves, and disposable gowns.

(9) Quarantine--The practice of keeping someone who might have been exposed to COVID-19 away from others. Quarantine helps prevent spread of disease that can occur before a person knows they are sick or if they are infected with the virus without experiencing symptoms.

(10) Unknown COVID-19 status--A person, except as provided by the CDC for an individual who is fully vaccinated for COVID-19 or recovered from COVID-19, who:

(A) is a new admission or readmission;

(B) has spent one or more nights away from the facility;

(C) has had known exposure or close contact with a person who is COVID-19 positive; or

(D) is exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 while awaiting test results.

(b) An intermediate care facility must have a protocol in place, included in its COVID-19 response plan, that describes how, if the facility cannot successfully isolate the individual, the facility will transfer a COVID-19 positive individual to a facility capable of isolating and caring for the COVID-19 positive individual.

(1) An intermediate care facility must have contracts or agreements with alternative appropriate facilities to ensure care for COVID-19 positive individuals.

(2) An intermediate care facility must assist the individual and family members as needed to transfer the individual to the alternate facility.

(c) An intermediate care facility must have a COVID-19 response plan that includes:

(1) designated space for:

(A) COVID-19 negative individuals;

(B) individuals with unknown COVID-19 status; and

(C) COVID-19 positive individuals, when the facility is able to care for an individual at this level or until arrangements can be made to transfer the individual to a higher level of care;

(2) spaces for staff to don and doff PPE that minimize the movement of staff through other areas of the facility;

(3) individual transport protocols;

(4) plans for obtaining and maintaining a two-week supply of PPE, including surgical facemasks, gowns, gloves, and goggles or face shields; and

(5) if the facility houses COVID-19 positive individuals, an individual recovery plan for continuing care after an individual is recovering from COVID-19 as per CDC guidelines on recovery.

(d) An intermediate care facility must screen all individuals, staff, and people who come to the facility in accordance with HHSC guidance.

(e) An intermediate care facility must screen individuals according to HHSC guidance:

(1) upon admission or readmission to the facility; and

(2) at least once a day.

(f) An intermediate care facility must screen each employee or contractor in accordance with HHSC guidance before entering the facility at the start of their shift. Staff screenings must be documented in a log kept at the facility entrance, and must include the name of each person screened, the date and time of the evaluation, and the results of the evaluation. Staff who meet any of the criteria must not be permitted to enter the facility.

(g) An intermediate care facility must assign each individual to the appropriate cohort based on the individual's COVID-19 status.

(h) An individual with unknown COVID-19 status must be quarantined and monitored for fever and other symptoms of COVID-19 in accordance with CDC guidance.

(i) An individual with COVID-19 positive status must be isolated until the individual meets CDC guidelines for the discontinuation of transmission-based precautions, if cared for in the facility.

(j) If an individual with COVID-19 positive status must be transferred for a higher level of care, the facility must isolate the individual until the individual can be transferred.

(k) An intermediate care facility must implement a staffing policy requiring the following:

(1) staff must wear appropriate PPE based on the cohort with which they work;

(2) staff must inform the facility per facility policy prior to reporting for work if they have known exposure or symptoms;

(3) staff must perform self-monitoring on days they do not work; and

(4) the facility must develop and implement a policy regarding staff working with other long-term care (LTC) providers that limits the sharing of staff with other LTC providers and facilities, unless required in order to maintain adequate staffing at a facility.

(l) The facility must develop and enforce policies and procedures for infection control. The written standards, policies, and procedures for the facility's infection prevention and control program must include standard and transmission-based precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19, including the appropriate use of PPE. All facemasks and N95 masks must be in good functional condition as described in COVID-19 Response Plan for Intermediate Care Facilities.

(1) A facility must comply with CDC guidance on the optimization of PPE when supply limitations require PPE to be reused.

(2) A facility must document all efforts made to obtain PPE, including each organization contacted and the date of each attempt.

(m) COVID-19 activity must be reported to the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) Complaint and Incident Intake as described below.

(1) A facility must report the first confirmed case of COVID-19 in staff or individuals, and the first confirmed case of COVID-19 after a facility has been without cases for 14 days or more, to HHSC Complaint and Incident Intake (CII) through TULIP, or by calling 1-800-458-9858, within 24 hours of the positive confirmation.

(2) A facility must submit a Form 3613-A Provider Investigation Report to HHSC Complaint and Incident Intake, through TULIP or by calling 1-800-458-9858, within five working days from the day a confirmed case is reported to CII.