

**Communicable Disease Epidemiology
and Immunization Section**

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Updated 1/25/2022

Subject: In the context of increasing Omicron variant circulating locally, Public Health – Seattle & King County encourages all long-term care facilities to increase staff testing through the end of January 2022 to support early identification and isolation of COVID-19 cases.

Dear King County Long-Term Care Facilities,

This is a supplemental update to the Public Health – Seattle & King County Long-Term Care Facility Testing Recommendation letter issued on 5/25/21 ([click here](#)). Please continue to follow the public health recommendations within that letter.

With the increase of COVID-19 Omicron variant now circulating in our community, public health is working to identify ways to reduce the risk to staff and residents in long-term care facilities. In addition to the 5/25/21 testing recommendation letter, **Public Health is encouraging all long-term care facilities in King County to increase staff testing where able through February 18, 2022.** Currently, [CMS recommends](#) skilled nursing facilities test all staff, regardless of vaccination status, twice weekly for Covid-19. At this time, public health encourages all skilled nursing facilities to increase staff testing to at least three times weekly, or more frequently if resources allow. Other facility types such as assisted living, adult family homes and supported living facilities are also encouraged to increase staff testing as frequently as resources allow, ideally 2-3 times per week.

Increasing staff testing will identify COVID-19 cases earlier, including Omicron, allowing facilities to initiate outbreak mitigation measures more rapidly. As we have seen throughout the pandemic, mitigation measures such as isolation, quarantine, and proper PPE usage, significantly reduce the opportunity for transmission within a facility; therefore, reducing the severity of an outbreak.

Public Health is available to offer support and resources as needed. We can be reached through our Public Health Information Call Center 206-477-3977 or by email at LTCFCOVIDSupport@kingcounty.gov.

Thank you for your continued dedication and effort to keep our community safe.

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