# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

**DATE:** October 14, 2026

**TO:** Assisted Living Facilities, Adult Day Centers, and Children's Residential Facilities

**FROM:** Tara Ragland, Director, Division of Licensing Programs

**SUBJECT:** Respiratory Illness and Outbreaks Updates 2026

Respiratory illness season is underway, and the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) Division of Licensing Programs (DOLP) has received reports of outbreaks of respiratory illnesses.

Outbreaks should be reported to your licensing representative and the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) within 24 hours of the occurrence. VDH provides two options for reporting suspected outbreaks. Outbreaks can be reported to your local health district by contacting them directly or by using the Suspected Outbreak Reporting Portal.

According to VDH, an outbreak happens when more people than usual get sick with the same illness in a certain area or group over a short period of time. You should monitor illnesses occurring within your facility or program and be alert to any sudden increase in people getting sick at the same time; or two or more people who are showing similar symptoms and share things in common, such as activities, living areas, or schedules. For awareness of respiratory trends in your community, providers can review the VDH Respiratory Illness Dashboard.

**Providers with suspected or confirmed outbreaks of respiratory illnesses should be coordinating with VDH regarding implementation of mitigation strategies, including management of staff with infection or exposure to infections and returning to work.**

VDH may schedule a site visit in response to a report of an outbreak to provide mitigation recommendations tailored for that specific setting. Providers are urged to participate in these site visits with VDH to promote the best possible outcomes for residents/participants and staff.

**A separate memorandum from the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) including updated healthcare personnel return to work recommendations is included as an attachment for your awareness.**

If you have any questions, please contact the DOLP Clinical and Training team at Clinical.Training@dss.virginia.gov.

COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
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October 2, 2026

CDC has recently updated their Guideline for Infection Control in Healthcare Personnel to include a Viral Respiratory Infections section and their Guideline for Isolation Precautions Appendix A to include recommendations for SARS-CoV-2. The VDH Healthcare-Associated Infections and Antimicrobial Resistance (HAI/AR) and Respiratory Disease Programs have determined that VDH is **in alignment** with these recommendations and supportive of the comprehensive CDC materials. VDH is in the process of updating resources and materials affected by these recommendation changes.

***Healthcare personnel return to work recommendations***

VDH has aligned with updated CDC recommendations for the management of healthcare personnel exposed to or infected with a viral respiratory infection. These recommendations apply to respiratory viruses such as SARS-CoV-2, influenza, RSV, parainfluenza, rhinovirus, enteroviruses, and others. The September 2025 VDH interim recommendations for return to work for HCP with SARS-CoV-2 or influenza have been **retired**.

Per current CDC recommendations, healthcare personnel with a suspected or confirmed **viral respiratory infection** are:

- Restricted from work until:
  - At least 3 days have passed from symptom onset, AND
  - They are fever free for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications, AND
  - Symptoms are improving, AND
  - They feel well enough to return to work.
- Upon return to work, they should wear source control until at least the end of day 7.

Asymptomatic healthcare personnel with a known or suspected **exposure** to a respiratory virus:

- Do not need to be restricted from work.
- Should wear source control from the day of first exposure through at least the 5$^{th}$ day after their last exposure and should monitor themselves for the development of signs or symptoms of respiratory illness for at least 5 days after their last exposure.

Additional details are described in the Viral Respiratory Infection chapter of Infection Control in Healthcare Personnel. VDH provides additional ways to Prevent Transmission of Respiratory Viruses in Healthcare Settings.

**Duration of Transmission-Based Precautions and Recommended Personal Protective Equipment for Patients/Residents with SARS-CoV-2**

When caring for patients or residents with SARS-CoV-2, VDH recommendations align with CDC (Guideline for Isolation Precautions: Appendix A; see "Respiratory infectious disease, acute").

- Healthcare personnel should wear a gown, gloves, eye protection, and N95 respirator or higher. Duration of Transmission-Based Precautions is based on severity of illness and whether the patient/resident is immunocompromised.

Please contact your local health department if you have any questions.

Thank you,

The Healthcare-Associated Infections and Antimicrobial Resistance Program

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