



To: **Licensed Nursing Facilities**

Subject: **Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Temporary Blanket Waiver Updates: CNA training and Certification, Nurse Aide Training, Competency Evaluation Programs and Paid Feeding Assistant Programs**

On Friday, March 13, 2020, President Donald Trump declared a national emergency due to coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar issued a section 1135 blanket waiver and Governor Tate Reeves declared a state of emergency for the state of Mississippi. As a part of the state's preparation and response to COVID-19, the Mississippi State Department of Health is announcing several temporary waiver changes to protect the health and safety of Mississippians. This impacts certified nurse aides (CNA's), CNA candidates, temporary Nurse Aides (NA's) paid feeding assistants (PFAs) and health care providers.

These blanket waiver changes are a part of MSDH's ongoing efforts to stop the spread of COVID-19 and other respiratory viruses in Mississippi. These temporary policy changes are expected to sunset after the COVID-19 outbreak has subsided. Sunset dates and additional changes related to MSDH response to the COVID-19 outbreak, will be communicated through future provider bulletins.

### **CNA Training and Certification**

Programs that are currently being taught at community colleges and proprietary schools can hold classes online through distance education learning. Classroom instruction must equal the minimum required **75 hours**.

Clinical instruction: MSDH will allow CNA candidates to receive clinical skills training in a simulation environment, or in an approved health care facility under the direction of a Registered Nurse (RN). Clinical instruction must equal the required **16 hours**.

MSDH is asking all nursing homes that are listed as clinical sites for nurse aide training programs, to grant the students access into the facility for clinicals. The nursing home will screen the students in training, just as they would their regular employees.

CNA recertifications will be extended without proof of the required eight hour paid work requirement during this time.



MSDH provides a list of approved training courses for Nurse Aides on request. You can request a list of MSDH-approved nurse aide courses by emailing [antanikah.robbs@msdh.ms.gov](mailto:antanikah.robbs@msdh.ms.gov).

### **CNA Candidates**

CNA Candidates are those individuals who have completed an approved CNA program and have not yet been able to receive testing by Pearson Vue due to closed testing sites related to Covid-19. These individuals will be allowed to work in facilities beyond their 120-day window, until such time as the next available testing can be arranged by Pearson Vue, up to an additional 120 days extension if necessary. The CNA program can be one provided by an approved facility, or one taught at a community college or proprietary school.

### **Temporary Nurse Aides (TNA)**

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) is waiving the requirements at 42 CFR 483.35(d) [with the exception of 42 CFR 483.35(d)(1)(i)], which require that a skilled nursing facility and a nursing facility may not employ anyone for longer than four months unless they met the training and certification requirements under §483.35(d). To ensure the health and safety of nursing home residents, CMS is not waiving 42 CFR § 483.35(d)(1)(i), which requires facilities to not use any individual working as a nurse aide for more than four months, on a full-time basis, unless that individual is competent to provide nursing and nursing-related services. To meet the competency requirement, nursing facilities may temporarily employ individuals who have completed alternative training paths that ensure that such individuals are competent to provide relevant nursing and nursing-related services. Such temporary aides **must complete an eight-hour training program**, which may be conducted through distance education learning or face-to-face and **receive at least eight hours of clinical training** in a simulation environment, or in health care facility under the direction of an RN. A skills check off, **to be kept in the facility**, will also be **required** to be completed to assure competency prior to, the Nurse Aide being allowed to perform nursing assistant tasks.

TNAs must be paired with a CNA at all times while performing care for residents.

TNAs can work in nursing homes indefinitely during the COVID-19 pandemic.



**The nursing facility will be required to send a list (see attached) of any temporary Nurse Aides hired under this waiver program weekly, to the MS State Dept. of Health CNA Coordinator. If the worker terminates for any reason, the CNA Coordinator should also be notified.**

### **Reciprocity**

The Mississippi Department of Health Licensure and Certification will continue to honor reciprocity for CNAs. Reciprocity is a process by which a Certified Nurse Aide from another state may qualify for certification in Mississippi by virtue of his/her status in that other state. An individual is only eligible for reciprocity if he/she has been entered on a nurse aide registry in a state, other than Mississippi in accordance with the training and competency evaluation requirements of OBRA '87, as amended, and if the individual is currently listed on that state's nurse aide registry as **ACTIVE and in good standing**. You must apply for reciprocity in Mississippi, however, if the CNA can provide documentation of their active Certification, then they may operate temporarily as a CNA in Mississippi under the blanket waiver provided there are no findings of abuse or neglect on any Nurse Aide registry. At the **end of the blanket waiver**, the CNA must officially apply for reciprocity in Mississippi. This can be done by requesting a Reciprocity Application Form from [www.PearsonVue.com](http://www.PearsonVue.com).

### **Paid Feeding Assistant Programs:**

Applications are still being accepted for the Paid Feeding Assistant Program during this time.

MSDH Licensure and Certification will extend current PFA program recertifications.

MSDH Licensure and Certification will grant approval to nursing facilities seeking initial certification upon a desk review of training materials and required documentation.



### **Latest Public Health Guidance, Information and Resources**

Licensed Nursing Providers should continue to refer to the Mississippi State Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) websites for the latest information and resources. This includes checking the MSDH and CDC websites for the latest guidance on how to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus and appropriate care for individuals with suspected or confirmed illness.

MSDH recognizes that it is imperative that facilities be able to staff adequately during this time and wants to support those efforts by making these necessary adjustments.

We wish you all health and safety.

### **Contact**

For further Information regarding the Nurse Aide program or Paid Feeding Assistant Program contact Antanikah Robbins, CNA Coordinator, at 601-364-2718 or 601-364-1100, or [antanikah.robbsins@msdh.ms.gov](mailto:antanikah.robbsins@msdh.ms.gov).