

California Long-Term Care Ombudsman (LTCO) Program Procedures for Ombudsman Representatives with COVID-19 Exposure or Positive COVID-19 Tests

This guidance outlines requirements in the event of COVID-19 exposure or positive COVID-19 tests for: Individual Ombudsman representatives, Local LTC Ombudsman Coordinators, and the State LTC Ombudsman. These protocols are based on CDC guidance and OSLTCO requirements. Individual Ombudsman representatives may need to follow stricter protocols based on County Public Health requirements or the advice of their health care providers. Ombudsman representatives visiting LTC facilities must at a minimum follow universal masking protocols, practice social distancing, complete daily symptom screening, and be tested for COVID-19 at least once a week. When visiting facilities with known active COVID infections, Ombudsman representatives must wear FIT-tested N95 respirators, eye protection, and gloves. For additional infection prevention and control requirements, refer to *Phase I and Phase II Procedures for LTC Ombudsman Representatives*.

<https://aqing.ca.gov/covid19/>

Responsibilities of Individual Ombudsman Representatives:

Exposure: Any Ombudsman representative who learns that someone with whom they have been in close contact¹ within the past 14 days has contracted COVID-19 must as soon as possible and no later than 24 hours from learning of the exposure, do the following:

- Notify the local LTC Ombudsman program coordinator about the exposure and furnish the coordinator with the following information:
 - o Provide the names of all facilities the Ombudsman representative visited since the exposure
 - o Provide the names of all individuals at each facility with whom the Ombudsman representative was in close contact
 - o The type of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) the Ombudsman representative was wearing at each facility
- Contact the local public health department to discuss the exposure and recommendations
- Follow all local public health directives on contact tracing
- Follow all local public health directions on quarantining after an exposure (CDC guidance on quarantining is included below.)
- Do not visit any other LTC facility until the quarantine period is over
- Keep confidential all individual information beyond what is needed to exercise the above responsibilities

¹ The CDC defines close contact as being within six feet of an individual for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more within a 24-hour period. **NOTE:** Close contact does not include situations wherein Ombudsman representatives are wearing a fit-tested N-95 mask, eye protector, and gloves.

Positive Test: Any Ombudsman representative who has tested positive for COVID-19, must do the following:

- As soon as possible but no later than 24 hours of receipt of the test result, notify the local LTC Ombudsman program coordinator.
- Furnish the coordinator with the following information:
 - Names of all facilities the Ombudsman representative visited in the last 14 days
 - Names of all individuals at each facility with whom the Ombudsman representative was in close contact while at the facility
 - The type of PPE the Ombudsman representative was wearing at each facility
- Contact the local public health department to discuss the exposure and recommendations
- Follow all local public health directives on contact tracing
- Follow all local public health directions on isolating after a positive test result (LTC Ombudsman protocols on isolating based on CDC guidance are included below)
- Not visit any other LTC facility for at least 14 days after testing positive for COVID-19 or when symptoms are present
- Keep confidential all individual information beyond what is needed to exercise the above responsibilities

Responsibilities of Local LTC Ombudsman Program Coordinators:

Exposure: A local LTC Ombudsman program coordinator who learns that an Ombudsman representative has been exposed to an active COVID-19 infection, as defined above, shall do the following as soon as possible but no later than 24 hours:

- Inform the individual Ombudsman representative of their responsibilities when exposed, as listed above
- Notify the Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman (OSLTCO) via an email to their assigned OSLTCO program analyst and the State Ombudsman
- Contact the administrator of each facility (via a phone call, preferably, or email) visited by the Ombudsman representative since the exposure
- Send an email to the assigned OSLTCO program analyst and the State Ombudsman informing them that notification to affected facilities has been completed
- Keep confidential all individual information beyond what is needed to exercise the above responsibilities

Positive Test: A local LTC Ombudsman program coordinator who learns that an Ombudsman representative has tested positive for COVID-19 shall do the following as soon as possible but no later than 24 hours:

- Inform the individual Ombudsman representative of their responsibilities when testing positive, listed above
- Notify the Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman (OSLTCO) via an email to their assigned OSLTCO program analyst and the State Ombudsman
- Contact the administrator of each facility (via a phone call, preferably, or email) visited by the Ombudsman representative in the past 14 days
- Send an email to the assigned OSLTCO program analyst and the State Ombudsman informing them that notification to affected facilities has been completed
- Keep confidential all individual information beyond what is needed to exercise the above responsibilities

Responsibilities of the State LTC Ombudsman:

Exposures or Positive Tests: Upon learning that an Ombudsman representative has either been exposed, as defined above, or has tested positive for COVID-19, the State Ombudsman or his designee shall as soon as possible but no later than 24 hours:

- Notify the California Department of Public Health Center for Health Care Quality if the Ombudsman representative has visited a skilled nursing facility or other long-term health care facility since their last negative COVID-19 test and disclose the facility name
- Notify the California Department of Social Services Community Care Licensing Division if the Ombudsman representative has visited a residential care facility for the elderly or other community care facility since their last negative COVID-19 test and disclose the facility name
- Keep confidential all individual information beyond what is needed to exercise the above responsibilities
- Monitor aggregate program data trends in Ombudsman representatives' exposures and positive tests, for any additional changes needed to program operations

CDC Guidance on Isolating and Quarantining

The following protocols of the LTC Ombudsman Program are based on CDC guidance. Individual Ombudsman representatives may need to follow stricter guidelines based on their county public health departments or the direction of their health care providers. Additional details may be found here:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html>

Scenario 1: An Ombudsman representative has been exposed to COVID-19 either in or outside of an LTC facility

- As in the other scenarios, the Ombudsman representative must immediately notify the local LTC Ombudsman coordinator, provide required information, and follow local public health requirements.
- An individual who has been in close contact with a person infected with COVID-19 should quarantine for a minimum of 14 days after their last exposure to the infected person.
- Close contact means being within six feet of the infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more within a 24-hour period.
- Quarantine means staying home, separate from other people, and monitoring for any symptoms of COVID-19.

NOTE: *Close contact does not include situations wherein Ombudsman representatives are wearing a fit-tested N-95 mask, eye protector, and gloves.*

Scenario 2: An Ombudsman representative receives a positive COVID-19 test but does not have any symptoms.

- The Ombudsman representative must immediately notify the LTC Ombudsman coordinator, provide the required information about facilities and close contacts, notify the local public health officer, and follow local public health directions.
- A positive COVID-19 test may indicate that an individual has been infected with the virus, even though they have no symptoms.

- To avoid spreading the disease, anyone who tests positive for COVID-19 shall isolate from other people for a minimum of ten days after the positive test.

Scenario 3: An Ombudsman representative tests positive and has symptoms

- As in the other scenarios, the Ombudsman representative must immediately notify the local LTC Ombudsman program coordinator, provide the required information about facilities and close contacts, notify the local public health officer, and follow local public health directives.
- An Ombudsman representative who tests positive for COVID-19 and has symptoms shall stay home and isolate from other people for at least:
 - Ten days after the positive test **and**
 - 24 hours after a fever of 100.4 or higher has resolved without the use of medication to control the fever **and**
 - Other symptoms are improving.
- The absence of taste, or smell, or both are not symptoms that need to improve before ending isolation, as these are symptoms that may last for weeks or months.
- An individual's health care provider may require a longer isolation period based on the health status of the individual.

Scenario 4: An Ombudsman representative has recovered from COVID-19, meets the requirements for recovery, and wants to know whether to return to the regular testing protocol

- An individual who has recovered from COVID-19 symptoms after testing positive may continue to test positive for three months or more without being contagious to others.
- For that reason, CDC recommends only retesting within three months if the individual develops new COVID-19 symptoms.
- The Ombudsman representative does not need to wait for a negative test result before returning to work, including in-person facility visits.

These requirements are not exhaustive. We encourage Ombudsman coordinators to check with their human resources departments for additional requirements. Please contact OSLTCO at stateomb@aging.ca.gov with any questions or concerns.