



May 7, 2020

MEMORANDUM

TO: Nursing Homes

FROM: Gwen C. Thompson, Director of Healthcare Quality

SUBJECT: Use of certified emergency medical technicians (EMTs) as nurse aides during COVID-19 public health emergency

On March 13, 2020, Governor Henry McMaster issued Executive Order No. 2020-08, which declared a State of Emergency in South Carolina based on the determination that the 2019 novel coronavirus (“COVID-19”) was an imminent public health threat. Subsequently, on March 17, 2020, Governor McMaster issued Executive Order No. 2020-10, which directed state agencies to take appropriate actions regarding provisions of existing regulations that in any way prevent, hinder, or delay necessary action in coping with the emergency. On March 28, 2020, April 12, 2020, and April 27, 2020, Governor McMaster issued Executive Orders No. 2020-15, 2020-23, and 2020-29, respectively, which further extended the State of Emergency.

Staffing shortages at nursing homes as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic have the potential to threaten the health and safety of residents. Pursuant to Section 203 of Regulation 61-17, Standards for Licensing Nursing Homes, S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control (“DHEC”) hereby waives Regulation 61-17, Section 603.C to temporarily allow nursing homes to employ certified South Carolina EMTs¹ to perform tasks that nurse aides generally perform including meeting residents’ needs for personal hygiene, nutrition, ambulation, and elimination, as well as taking vital signs. This waiver will remain in effect during the declared State of Emergency.

Nursing homes temporarily employing certified EMTs under this waiver shall comply with the [S.C. Department of Health and Human Services’ \(“DHHS”\) Medicaid Bulletin regarding temporary nurse aides](#). Pursuant to the Bulletin, nursing facilities may temporarily employ individuals who have completed alternative training paths that ensure such individuals are competent to provide relevant nursing and nursing-related services. See also the [Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services \(CMS\) Blanket Waivers](#). These 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 a health care facility under the direction of a registered nurse.

DHEC may rescind this memorandum at its discretion.

¹ This waiver is applicable to certified South Carolina EMTs who are not also certified as a nurse aide or enrolled in a nurse aide training and competency evaluation program.