

October 11, 2012

DAL: DACF/ALS 12-07
Subject: Cold Weather Advisory

Dear Administrator/Operator:

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the New York State Department of Health's expectations in ensuring that residents are comfortable and safe in adult care facilities (ACFs) throughout the winter months. Your assistance is appreciated as we continue to improve the lives of individuals residing in ACFs.

By regulation [487.3(a)(3) for Adult Homes, 488.3(a)(3) for Enriched Housing Programs and 490.3(a)(3) for Residences for Adults], each operator must provide a program which promotes the social, physical and mental well being of the residents. Section 461-q of Social Services Law requires the Department to set allowable temperatures for resident-occupied areas of the facility. To be in compliance with these regulations, each facility must have safe and comfortable temperature levels.

During the winter months many residents may be at risk for cold-related illnesses. Elderly residents and those with health problems such as diabetes, circulatory or thyroid disease are at risk of hypothermia and frostbite. Hypothermia is a drop in one's body temperature below 96 degrees and it can occur when exposure to the cold causes a person's body to lose heat faster than it can be produced. Frostbite is a decrease in blood flow to a person's extremities due to exposure to extreme cold resulting in freezing of the skin.

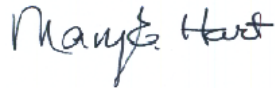
Hypothermia can occur with air temperatures of 60 to 65 degrees Fahrenheit (15-18 degrees Celsius). When the outside temperature is 65 degrees Fahrenheit or less (18 degrees Celsius or less), you must maintain the inside temperature in residents' bedrooms and all common areas at the temperature stated in regulation [487.11(m), 488.11(i) and 490.11(n)] for your type of ACF.

It is my expectation that all residents will be safe during the cold winter months. Enclosed are three informational bulletins. The first lists symptoms of cold-related illnesses, the second lists easy steps to prevent cold-related illnesses, and the third is a list of the steps that all ACFs must follow. **You must make this information available and post these informational materials in a conspicuous area accessible to both residents and staff.**

If you have further questions regarding any portion of this letter or the enclosures, please contact the Adult Care Facility Centralized Complaint Intake Program at 1-866-893-6772.

Thank you for your continued efforts to maintain the health and safety of the New York State residents that reside in your ACF.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary E. Hart". The signature is written in a cursive style with a loop at the end of the last name.

Mary E. Hart
Director
Division of Adult Care Facility/Assisted
Living Surveillance

STEPS TO BE TAKEN BY ADULT CARE FACILITIES

1. Maintain heating systems in good working order in accordance with program regulations [Adult Homes 487.11(k)(9), Enriched Housing Program 488.11(g)(9) and Residences for Adults 490.11(i)(9)].
2. Routinely monitor the temperature in the facilities when the outdoor temperature is below 65 degrees Fahrenheit (18 degrees Celsius) to assure the inside temperature in residents' bedrooms and all common areas is maintain at the temperature stated in regulation [487.11(m), 488.11(i) and 490.11(n)] for your type of ACF.
3. If there are areas that fall below the required indoor temperature required by regulation residents must be moved to common areas that meet the proper temperature. The area must be of sufficient size to safely accommodate the residents.
4. If the minimum temperature is not sustained, the emergency plan must be activated.
5. All staff should be familiar with the policies and procedures and know when to implement them.
6. All staff should be familiar with the symptoms of cold-related illness and the initial treatments that should be initiated.
7. Check all doors/windows for drafts. Eliminate drafts when possible by drawing curtains/shades on days when the temperatures are below freezing. Encourage residents to sit away from windows/drafts.
8. Encourage residents to wear appropriate winter clothing while indoors and to dress in layers with appropriate outerwear when leaving the building. Residents should always wear a hat or ear covering and gloves when going outdoors.
9. Encourage residents not to partake in outdoor activities for extended periods of time.
10. Offer warm fluids/beverages to residents during the winter months.
11. The whereabouts of all residents must be accounted for as required by each program's regulations [Adult Homes 487.7(d)(i)(1), Enriched Housing Program 488.7(b)(i)(1), and Residences for Adults 490.7(d)(i)(iv)].

STEPS TO PREVENT COLD RELATED ILLNESSES HYPOTHERMIA AND FROSTBITE

1. Avoid prolonged outdoor exposure on very cold days.
2. Increase your activity level according to the temperature. Avoid activities that cause physical exhaustion.
3. Do not stay outdoors for extended periods of time when it is extremely cold.
4. Dress in layers. Layers of clothing are warmer than one thick layer of clothing.
5. Drink large amounts of non-alcoholic and decaffeinated warm fluids.
6. Replace wet or damp clothes as soon as possible during the winter months.
7. Always wear gloves and a hat when going out into the cold temperatures.
8. If you feel cold or begin to shiver, add a layer of clothing or notify a staff person.

**NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
OFFICE OF LONG TERM CARE**

SYMPTOMS OF COLD EXPOSURE AND TREATMENT

Cold-Related Illness	Signs and Symptoms	Treatment
Hypothermia	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Shivering• Confusion• Memory loss• Drowsiness• Exhaustion• Slurred speech• Glassy stare• Slow, Irregular Pulse• Numbness• Decreased level of consciousness	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Remove all <u>wet</u> clothing.2. Place resident in dry blankets/clothing.3. Move resident to warm environment inside.4. If conscious, give resident warm beverage.5. Seek medical attention to determine if further treatment is needed.
Frostbite	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Any discoloration of the skin; flushed, white, yellow or blue, depending on the length of exposure;• Skin appears waxy'• Lack of feeling or numbness	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Handle the frostbitten area gently.2. DO NOT RUB THE AREA.3. Place the affected area against a warm body part (e.g. armpit) or blow warm air onto it.