

UPDATE: Response to an Outbreak and Residents with Exposure to COVID-19 for Long-term Care Facilities



DATE:	2/15/2022
TO:	Health Alert Network
FROM:	Keara Klinepeter, Acting Secretary of Health
SUBJECT:	UPDATE: Response to an Outbreak and Residents with Exposure to COVID- 19 for Long-term Care Facilities
DISTRIBUTION:	Statewide
LOCATION:	n/a
STREET ADDRESS:	n/a
COUNTY:	n/a
MUNICIPALITY:	n/a
ZIP CODE:	n/a

This transmission is a Health Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.

HOSPITALS: PLEASE SHARE WITH ALL MEDICAL, PEDIATRIC, NURSING AND LABORATORY STAFF IN YOUR HOSPITAL; **EMS COUNCILS:** PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS APPROPRIATE; **FQHCs:** PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS APPROPRIATE **LOCAL HEALTH JURISDICTIONS:** PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS APPROPRIATE; **PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS:** PLEASE DISTRIBUTE TO YOUR MEMBERSHIP; **LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES:** PLEASE SHARE WITH ALL MEDICAL, INFECTION CONTROL, AND NURSING STAFF

This HAN provides guidance on response to exposure and outbreaks of COVID-19 for long-term care facilities. It incorporates changes made by CDC on February 2, 2022. Major additions and edits in this version include:

- For instances where the term “fully vaccinated” was previously used to guide infection prevention and control measures, a person must instead be “up to date” with all recommended COVID-19 vaccine doses.
- Residents in quarantine can be removed from Transmission-Based Precautions (TBPs) after day 10 following the exposure (day 0) if they do not develop symptoms.
- Although the 10-day quarantine period is preferred, residents can be removed from TBPs after day 7 following the exposure (day 0) if a viral test is negative for SARS-CoV-2 and they do not develop symptoms. The specimen should be collected and tested within 48 hours before the time of planned discontinuation of TBPs.
- Newly admitted residents and residents who have left the facility for >24 hours, regardless of vaccination status, should have a series of two viral tests for SARS-COV-2 infection; immediately and, if negative, again 5-7 days after their admission.
- In general, testing is not necessary for asymptomatic people who have recovered from SARS-CoV-2 infection in the prior 90 days; however, if testing is performed on these people, an antigen test instead of a nucleic acid amplification test (NAAT) is recommended.

This guidance replaces PA-HAN-610. Additions are written in red. If you have additional questions about this guidance, please contact DOH at 1-877-PA- HEALTH (1-877-724-3258) or your local health department.

This guidance is specific for long-term care facilities (LTCF) but may also be applicable to other congregate and residential settings. The guidance in this HAN applies to skilled nursing facilities (SNFs), personal care homes (PCHs), assisted living facilities (ALFs), and intermediate care facilities (ICFs) **except regarding visitation**. This visitation guidance applies only to SNFs. Other facility types should seek guidance from their licensing agency for visitation. **This guidance replaces PA-HAN-610**. Even as nursing homes resume more normal practices and begin relaxing restrictions, nursing homes must sustain core IPC practices and remain vigilant for SARS-CoV-2 infection among residents and HCP to prevent spread and protect residents and HCP from severe infections, hospitalizations, and death.

Core prevention measures for LTCFs are outlined separately in [PA-HAN-626](#) or its successor and should be reviewed closely. This guidance is designed to supplement the core measures with additional information to outline the facility's response to a new suspected, probable, or confirmed case of COVID-19 in facility HCP or a resident, or when a resident has been exposed to COVID-19.

The guidance contains the following sections:

1. Key definitions
2. New resident admissions
3. Residents who leave the facility for medical or social reasons
4. Residents or HCP with signs and symptoms of COVID-19
5. Identification of exposure to residents
6. Managing residents with exposure
7. Testing residents for SARS-CoV-2
8. Response to an outbreak of COVID-19
9. Comment on the use of zones

1. KEY DEFINITIONS

Close contact: Someone who was within 6 feet of an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period, during their infectious period. The infectious period begins from 2 days before illness onset (or, for asymptomatic patients, 2 days prior to specimen collection date of the positive test).

Healthcare Personnel (HCP): HCP refers to all paid and unpaid persons serving in healthcare settings who have the potential for direct or indirect exposure to patients or infectious materials, including body substances (e.g. blood, tissue, and specific body fluids); contaminated medical supplies, devices, and equipment; contaminated environmental surfaces; or contaminated air. HCP include, but are not limited to, emergency medical service personnel, nurses, nursing assistants, home healthcare personnel, physicians, technicians, therapists, phlebotomists, pharmacists, students and trainees, contractual staff not employed by the healthcare facility, and persons not directly involved in patient care, but who could be exposed to infectious agents that can be transmitted in the healthcare setting (e.g. clerical, dietary, environmental services, laundry, security, engineering and facilities management, administrative, billing, and volunteer personnel).

Immunocompromised: For the purposes of this guidance, moderate to severely immunocompromising conditions include, but might not be limited to, those defined in the CDC [Interim Clinical Considerations for Use of COVID-19 Vaccines](#).

- Other factors, such as end-stage renal disease, may pose a lower degree of immunocompromise and not clearly affect decisions about need for or duration of Transmission-Based Precautions if the individual had close contact with someone with SARS-CoV-2 infection. However, people in this category should consider continuing to practice physical distancing and use of source control while in a healthcare facility, **even if they are up to date with all recommended COVID-19 vaccine doses**.
- Ultimately, the degree of immunocompromise for the patient is determined by the treating provider, and preventive actions are tailored to each individual and situation.

Isolation for residents: The term isolation refers to the implementation of measures for a resident

with COVID-19 infection during their infectious period, to prevent transmission to other residents, HCP, or visitors. Isolation in LTCF residents includes:

- Use of standard and Transmission-Based Precautions for COVID-19; and
- Private room with a private bathroom or with another resident with laboratory-confirmed COVID-19, preferably in a COVID Care Unit; and
- Restrict the resident to their room with the door closed. In some circumstances (e.g., memory care units), keeping the door closed may pose resident safety risks and the door might need to remain open. If doors must remain open, work with facility engineers to implement strategies to minimize airflow into the hallway; and
- Follow visitation guidance as outlined in [QSO-20-39-NH](#); and
- Restrict residents to medically necessary outings during the isolation period; and
- Monitor by assessing symptoms, vital signs, oxygen saturation via pulse oximetry, and respiratory exam at least 3 times a day; and
- Follow the guidance in [PA-HAN-624](#) or its successor to determine duration of isolation for residents.

Long-term Care Facility: For the purposes of this guidance, LTCF includes, but is not limited to, skilled nursing facilities (SNF), personal care homes (PCH), assisted living residences (ALRs), Community Residential Rehabilitation Services (CRR), Long-Term Structured Residence (LTSR), Residential Treatment Facility for Adults (RTFA), and Intermediate Care Facilities (ICF).

Nucleic Acid Amplification Test (NAAT): A type of viral diagnostic test for SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. NAATs detect genetic material (nucleic acids). NAATs for SARS-CoV-2 specifically identify the RNA (ribonucleic acid) sequences that comprise the genetic material of the virus.

Nursing home-onset COVID-19: SARS-CoV-2 infection that originated in the nursing home. It does not refer to the following:

- Residents who were known to have COVID-19 on admission to the facility and were placed into appropriate Transmission-Based Precautions to prevent transmission to others in the facility.
- Residents who were placed into **empiric** Transmission-Based Precautions (quarantine) on admission and developed SARS-CoV-2 infection while in quarantine.
- Residents with a known exposure to COVID-19 from a visitor or during an outing who later developed COVID-19 but who were under **empiric Transmission-Based Precautions** (quarantine) for *their entire infectious period*.

Outbreak: The occurrence of one or more cases of COVID-19 in a LTCF that meet the following criteria:

- New nursing home-onset of COVID-19 in a resident; or
- New onset of COVID-19 in an HCP who was working in the facility while infectious (during the 2 days prior to symptom onset or positive test if asymptomatic).

Respirator: A respirator is a personal protective device that is worn on the face, covers at least the nose and mouth, and is used to reduce the wearer's risk of inhaling hazardous airborne particles (including dust particles and infectious agents), gases, or vapors. Respirators are certified by CDC/NIOSH, including those intended for use in healthcare.

Source control: Use of well-fitting cloth masks, **well-fitting** facemasks, or respirators to cover a person's mouth and nose to prevent spread of respiratory secretions when they are breathing, talking, sneezing, or coughing. Source control should not be placed on children under age 2, anyone who cannot wear one safely, such as someone who has a disability or an underlying medical condition that precludes wearing a cloth mask, facemask, or respirator safely, or anyone who is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise

unable to remove their cloth mask, facemask, or respirator without assistance. Face shields alone are not recommended for source control.

Testing or test: This term refers to [authorized nucleic acid or antigen detection assays](#) that have received an FDA Emergency Use Authorization for SARS-CoV-2.

Transmission-based precautions for COVID-19: HCP should wear an N95 or higher-level respirator, eye protection (i.e., goggles or a face shield that covers the front and sides of the face), gloves, and gown when caring for these residents. See [PA-HAN-624](#) or its successor for additional details.

Up to date: In general, being up to date on COVID-19 vaccination includes receiving all vaccines according to the recommendations provided by CDC. This includes a primary series of vaccine, booster doses, and any recommended third doses for immunocompromised people. For specifics, refer to [CDC guidance](#).

2. NEW RESIDENT ADMISSIONS

- Residents with **confirmed SARS-CoV-2 infection** who have **not met** criteria for discontinuation of Transmission-Based Precautions as per [PA-HAN-624](#) or its successor should be placed in isolation in the designated COVID Care Unit, regardless of vaccination status.
- **Newly admitted residents and residents who have left the facility for >24 hours, regardless of vaccination status, should have a series of two viral tests for SARS-COV-2 infection; immediately and, if negative, again 5-7 days after their admission.**
- **In general, testing is not necessary for asymptomatic people who have recovered from SARS-CoV-2 infection in the prior 90 days; however, if testing is performed on these people, an antigen test instead of a nucleic acid amplification test (NAAT) is recommended. This is because some people may remain NAAT positive but not be infectious during this period.**
- **In general, residents who are up to date with all recommended COVID-19 vaccine doses and residents who have recovered from SARS-CoV-2 infection in the prior 90 days do not need to be placed in quarantine but should be tested as described above. Quarantine might be considered if the resident is moderately to severely immunocompromised.**
- **Residents who are not up to date with all recommended COVID-19 vaccine doses and are new admissions or readmissions should be placed in quarantine, even if they have a negative test upon admission; COVID-19 vaccination should also be offered. New admission quarantine would ideally occur in a separate unit from quarantine for residents with known exposure to COVID-19 (see Section 4).**
 - **Facilities located in counties with low [community transmission](#) might elect to use a risk-based approach for determining which of these residents require quarantine upon admission. Decisions should be based on whether the resident had close contact with someone with SARS-CoV-2 infection while outside the facility and if there was consistent adherence to IPC practices in healthcare settings, during transportation, or in the community prior to admission.**

3. RESIDENTS WHO LEAVE THE FACILITY FOR MEDICAL OR SOCIAL REASONS

Residents who leave the facility should be reminded to follow all recommended IPC practices including well-fitting source control, physical distancing, and hand hygiene and to encourage those around them to do the same. Individuals accompanying residents (e.g., transport personnel, family members) should also be educated on and adhere to these IPC practices and should assist the resident with adherence.

For residents going to medical appointments, regular communication between the medical facility and the nursing home (in both directions) is essential to help identify residents with potential exposures or symptoms of COVID-19 before they enter the facility so that proper precautions can be implemented.

In most circumstances, quarantine is not recommended for residents who leave the facility for less than 24 hours (e.g., for medical appointments, community outings with family or friends) *unless they are not up to date with all recommended COVID-19 vaccine doses and:*

- The resident, medical provider, or family report that the resident had close contact with someone with SARS-CoV-2 infection; or
- Based on an assessment of risk, uncertainty exists about the resident's adherence or the adherence of those around them to recommended IPC measures. The risk assessment should be documented by the facility in the resident's chart and outline the decision-making process.

Residents who leave the facility **for 24 hours or longer** should be managed as described in Section 2: New Resident Admissions. This includes for overnight hospitalizations greater than 24 hours.

Refer to CMS [QSO-20-39-NH Revised](#) for additional guidance on resident outings.

4. RESIDENTS OR HCP WITH SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19

- Residents:
 - At least daily, take the temperature of all residents and ask them if they have any [COVID-19 symptoms](#), as outlined in [PA-HAN-626](#) or its successor.
 - If signs and symptoms of COVID-19 develop:
 - Perform viral testing; and
 - Implement isolation while results are pending; and
 - Place roommate(s) **who are not up to date with all recommended COVID-19 vaccine doses** under quarantine immediately. Remove roommate quarantine if an alternative diagnosis is identified and SARS-CoV-2 viral testing is negative (i.e., roommate quarantine does not need to be a full **10 days** if the resident is determined to not have COVID-19 infection); and
 - Do **not** place a person with *suspected* COVID-19 into a COVID Care Unit prior to confirmation of infection by positive test result.
 - **Older adults with SARS-CoV-2 infection may not show common symptoms such as fever or respiratory symptoms. Other COVID-19 symptoms can include fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, sore throat, loss of taste and/or smell, or new dizziness, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea. Additionally, more than two temperatures >99.0°F might also be a sign of fever in this population. Identification of these symptoms should prompt isolation and further evaluation for SARS-CoV-2 infection.**
 - **Because some of the symptoms are similar, it may be difficult to tell the difference between influenza, COVID-19, and other acute respiratory infections, based on symptoms alone. Consider testing for pathogens other than SARS-CoV-2 and initiating appropriate infection prevention precautions for symptomatic older adults.**
 - If symptomatic residents test positive for COVID-19, follow guidance outlined in [PA-HAN-624](#) or its successor.
- HCP:
 - HCP with signs or symptoms of COVID-19 should be tested for SARS-CoV-2 and excluded from work pending results. They should follow recommendations in [PA-HAN-619](#) or its successor while home and awaiting results. If viral testing results are negative, return to work should be based on the facility's policy. If positive, follow guidance for return-to-work in [PA-HAN-622](#) or its successor.
 - **HCP should not work while acutely ill, even if SARS-CoV-2 testing is negative, in order to minimize the risk of transmission of other infectious pathogens, including respiratory pathogens such as influenza.**
 - If an alternative diagnosis has been established through laboratory testing, may use return to work criteria for that diagnosis.
 - Otherwise, HCP should follow their facility's return to work policy for respiratory illness.

5. IDENTIFICATION OF EXPOSURE TO RESIDENTS

For residents in LTCFs, use the definition of a close contact as defined in Section 1 to identify exposures related to any of the following situations:

- By visitors outside or inside the facility; or
- At outside medical facilities or clinics; or
- During a social outing outside the facility that is either not hosted by the facility or involves only a small group of residents and staff.

Refer to Section 8 for guidance on response to a positive case in the facility that meets the definition of an outbreak. **Following identification that a close contact has occurred, manage resident(s) as outlined below.**

6. MANAGING RESIDENTS WITH EXPOSURE

Quarantine for residents with exposure is based on their vaccination status. Quarantine for residents includes:

- Use of standard and transmission-based precautions for COVID-19; and
- Maintain source control at all times while around others; and
- Test the resident for SARS-CoV-2 as described in the Section 7; and
- Place in a single-person room. If limited single rooms are available or if numerous residents are simultaneously identified to have known SARS-CoV-2 exposures or symptoms concerning for COVID-19, residents should shelter-in-place at their current location while being monitored for evidence of SARS-CoV-2 infection; and
- Restrict the resident to their room; and
- Restrict residents to medically necessary outings during the isolation period; and
- Follow visitation guidance as outlined in [QSO-20-39-NH](#); and
- Quarantine for residents should extend **10** days from the date of last exposure, regardless of the results of testing, unless the resident should become symptomatic or positive for SARS-CoV-2 during that period.

Residents who are not up to date with all recommended COVID-19 vaccine doses and who have had close contact with someone with SARS-CoV-2 infection should be placed in quarantine after their exposure, even if viral testing is negative. HCP caring for them should use full PPE (gowns, gloves, eye protection, and N95 or higher-level respirator).

- **Residents can be removed from empiric Transmission-Based Precautions (quarantine) after day 10 following the exposure (day 0) if they do not develop symptoms. Although the residual risk of infection is low, healthcare providers could consider testing for SARS-CoV-2 within 48 hours before the time of planned discontinuation of Transmission-Based Precautions.**
- **Alternatively, although the 10-day quarantine period is preferred, patients can be removed from empiric Transmission-Based Precautions (quarantine) after day 7 following the exposure (day 0) if a viral test is negative for SARS-CoV-2 and they do not develop symptoms. The specimen should be collected and tested within 48 hours before the time of planned discontinuation of Transmission-Based Precautions.**

Residents who are up to date with all recommended COVID-19 vaccine doses and residents who have recovered from SARS-CoV-2 infection in the prior 90 days do not need to be quarantined, restricted to their room, or cared for by HCP using the full PPE recommended for the care of a resident with SARS-CoV-2 infection unless they develop symptoms of COVID-19, are diagnosed with SARS-CoV-2 infection, or the facility is directed to do so by the jurisdiction's public health authority. Quarantine might also be considered if the resident is moderately to severely immunocompromised.

Residents **up to date with all recommended COVID-19 vaccine doses** and who have had close contact with someone with SARS-CoV-2 infection, or have an identified exposure using broad-

based methods, should:

- Follow **testing** guidance in Section 7 for asymptomatic exposed persons; and
- **Implement Source control:** Universal use of source control while in the healthcare facility is recommended for **10** days following their higher-risk exposure, then they may default to routine source control recommendations for HCP outlined in [PA-HAN-624](#) or its successor.

7. TESTING RESIDENTS AND HCP FOR SARS-COV-2

- Anyone with even mild symptoms of COVID-19, regardless of vaccination status, should receive a viral test as soon as possible.
- **In general, testing is not necessary for asymptomatic people who have recovered from SARS-CoV-2 infection in the prior 90 days; however, if testing is performed on these people, an antigen test instead of a nucleic acid amplification test (NAAT) is recommended. This is because some people may remain NAAT positive but not be infectious during this period.**
- Residents
 - Asymptomatic residents who have had close contact with someone with SARS-CoV-2 infection, or have an identified exposure using broad-based methods, **regardless of vaccination status**, should have a series of two viral tests for SARS-CoV-2 infection.
 - **If the date of a discrete exposure is known:** testing is recommended immediately (but not earlier than **24 hours** after the exposure) and, if negative, again 5–7 days after the exposure.
 - **If the date of a discrete exposure is NOT known** (for example, a positive roommate with an unclear symptom onset date): testing is recommended immediately and, if negative, again 5–7 days after the first test.
- **HCP**
 - **Expanded screening testing of asymptomatic HCP should be as follows:**
 - **HCP who are up to date with all recommended COVID-19 vaccine doses may be exempt from expanded screening testing.**
 - **In nursing homes, expanded screening testing should be conducted based on the level of community transmission outlined in [CMS QSO-20-38-NH REVISED](#).**
 - **It is best practice to include HCP who are fully vaccinated but not up to date in the expanded testing. At the time of publication, this is not *required* by [CMS QSO-20-38-NH REVISED](#).**
- Testing for outbreak response is described in the next section.

8. RESPONSE TO AN OUTBREAK OF COVID-19

The guidance in this HAN applies to SNFs, PCHs, ALFs, and ICFs **except regarding visitation**. This visitation guidance applies only to SNFs. Other facility types should seek guidance from their licensing agency for visitation.

A. Definition of an outbreak

A single new case of SARS-CoV-2 infection in any resident or HCP should be evaluated as a potential outbreak. Residents with confirmed COVID-19 infection should be placed in the COVID Care Unit under isolation as described in [PA-HAN-624](#) or its successor. HCP with confirmed COVID-19 infection should be excluded from work per [PA-HAN-622](#) or its successor.

An outbreak is defined as the occurrence of one or more cases of COVID-19 in a LTCF that meet the following criteria:

- New **nursing home-onset** of COVID-19 in a resident; or
- New onset of COVID-19 in an HCP who was working in the facility while infectious (during the 2 days prior to symptom onset or positive test, if asymptomatic).

Identification of a single new case 14 days after the last known case would meet the criteria for a new

outbreak and prompt the need for an outbreak response.

B. Choosing an outbreak response method

Upon identification of one or more cases of COVID-19 meeting the definition of an outbreak above, the facility should carefully consider options to conduct **outbreak response**:

- Use of contact tracing to identify exposed residents, staff, and visitors; or
- Use of a unit-based approach to identify exposed residents, staff, and visitors; or
- Use of a facility-wide approach to identify exposed residents, staff, and visitors.

Choosing an outbreak response method is also described in Figure 1. The approach to an outbreak response should take into consideration whether the facility has the experience and resources to perform individual contact tracing, the vaccination acceptance rates of staff and residents, whether the index case is a healthcare worker or resident, whether there are other individuals with suspected or confirmed SARS-CoV-2 infection identified at the same time as the index case, and the extent of potential exposures identified during the evaluation of the index case.

A contact tracing-based initial outbreak response may later need to be expanded, if transmission occurs within a wider range of areas within the facility, or per recommendations made by the local public health department. For example, if a contact tracing-based approach is used to initially respond, but additional cases develop in an area of the facility where epidemiologic links were not previously identified, a unit-based or facility-wide approach may then be warranted.

C. Response measures for all outbreak response methods

- Increase monitoring of all residents to every shift to rapidly detect those with new symptoms.
- If there is a suspect case, and test results for the suspect case are anticipated to take longer than 2-3 days, *do not wait* to implement outbreak response interventions. Begin planning and executing outbreak response as outlined below while awaiting test results.

D. Implementing a contact-tracing based approach to outbreak response:

Perform contact tracing to identify any HCP who have had a higher-risk exposure or residents who may have had close contact with the individual with SARS-CoV-2 infection:

- All HCP who have had a higher-risk exposure and residents who have had close contacts, **regardless of vaccination status**, should be tested immediately (but not earlier than **24 hours** after the exposure) and 5–7 days after exposure, as described in the testing section.
 - Restriction from work, quarantine, and testing is not recommended for people who have had SARS-CoV-2 infection in the last 90 days if they remain asymptomatic. Potential exceptions are described in [PA-HAN-621](#) or its successor.
- Residents identified as close contacts should be treated as described in Section 6 according to their vaccination status.
- HCP identified as having high-risk exposure should be treated as described in [PA-HAN-621](#) or its successor.
- **If testing of close contacts does not reveal additional HCP or residents with SARS-CoV-2 infection**, continue to manage residents as outlined in Section 6 for **10** days following exposure. After the initial series of 2 viral tests, ongoing testing is not required if close contacts remain asymptomatic.
- **If testing of close contacts reveals additional HCP or residents with SARS-CoV-2 infection**, contact tracing should be continued to identify residents with close contact or HCP with higher-risk exposures to the newly identified individual(s) with SARS-CoV-2 infection.
 - A facility-wide or unit-level (e.g., unit, floor, or other specific area(s) of the facility) approach should be implemented if all potential contacts cannot be identified or managed with contact tracing or if contact tracing fails to halt transmission.
 - If the outbreak investigation is broadened to either a facility-wide or unit-based

approach, follow recommendations below.

E. Implementing a broad-based approach (unit-based or facility-wide) to outbreak response:

The unit-based or facility-wide approach may be the best option in certain outbreak situations. These methods are also outlined in Figures 2 and 3. We recommend consulting with the local public health department to determine how best to respond to an outbreak if needed.

- **Identify exposed residents by unit** within the following guidelines:
 - A resident *on the same unit* as another resident who was directly cared for (within 6 feet or less) for any duration of time, by an HCP positive for COVID-19 during the HCP's infectious period, *if this care occurred within the LTCF*; or
 - A resident on the same unit as another resident who has COVID-19 infection, if the infected resident was not on quarantine, or did not adhere to quarantine measures during their infectious period.
- **Perform viral testing** for SARS-CoV-2 facility-wide for all residents and HCP, or for a unit-based approach, perform viral testing for:
 - All residents considered exposed by unit; and
 - All HCP working on the unit(s) during the exposure period, or who are regularly assigned to work on the affected unit(s).

Test regardless of vaccination status, immediately (but not earlier than **24 hours** after the exposure, if known) and, if negative, again 5-7 days later.

- **Managing exposed residents and HCP as part of the unit-based or facility-wide response:**
 - **Asymptomatic persons** (residents and HCP) with SARS-CoV-2 infection in the last 90 days:
 - Do not need to be quarantined.
 - Testing is not recommended for these persons if they remain asymptomatic; **however, if testing is performed, an antigen test instead of a nucleic acid amplification test (NAAT) is recommended. This is because some people may remain NAAT positive but not be infectious during this period.**
 - **Residents and HCP who are not up to date with all recommended COVID-19 vaccine doses:**
 - These residents should be managed as described in Section 6. They should generally be restricted to their rooms, even if testing is negative, and cared for by HCP using an N95 or higher-level respirator, eye protection (goggles or a face shield that covers the front and sides of the face), gloves and gown. They should not participate in group activities.
 - For guidance about work restriction for HCP who are identified to have had higher-risk exposures, refer to [PA-HAN-621](#) or its successor.
 - **Residents and HCP who are up to date with all recommended COVID-19 vaccine doses:**
 - These residents should be managed as described in Section 6. They do not need to be restricted to their rooms or cared for by HCP using the full PPE recommended for the care of a resident with SARS-CoV-2 infection unless they develop symptoms of COVID-19, are diagnosed with SARS-CoV-2 infection, or the facility is directed to do so by the local public health department.
 - For guidance about work restriction for HCP who are identified to have had higher-risk exposures, refer to [PA-HAN-621](#) or its successor.
- **If additional cases are identified**, testing should continue on affected unit(s) or facility-wide every 3-7 days in addition to room restriction and full PPE use for care of residents **who are not up to date with all recommended COVID-19 vaccine doses**, until there are no new cases for 14 days.
 - If antigen testing is used, more frequent testing (every 3 days), should be considered.
 - **Ongoing transmission:** Evidence of ongoing transmission may include the detection of new cases in additional unit(s) or new cases being detected beyond

the first 14-day period. In the event of ongoing transmission within a facility that is not controlled with initial interventions:

- Strongly consider use of quarantine **for residents and work restriction of HCP with higher-risk exposures, even if they are up to date with all recommended COVID-19 vaccine doses.**
 - Consider expanding testing to facility-wide, if not already done.
 - In addition, there might be other circumstances for which the jurisdiction's public health department recommends these and additional precautions.
- **If no additional cases** are identified during the broad-based testing, room restriction and full PPE use by HCP caring for residents **who are not up to date with all recommended COVID-19 vaccine doses** can be discontinued after 14 days. After the initial series of 2 viral tests, ongoing testing is not required if exposed residents and HCP remain asymptomatic.

F. Indoor visitation during an outbreak response:

- During an outbreak, SNFs should follow visitation guidance outlined in [CMS QSO-20-39-NH](#).
- Visitors should be counseled about their potential to be exposed to SARS-CoV-2 in the facility.
- If residents or their representative would like to have a visit during an outbreak investigation, they should wear face coverings or masks during visits, regardless of vaccination status, and visits should ideally occur in the resident's room.
- Follow core principles of COVID-19 infection prevention outlined in [CMS QSO-20-39-NH](#) and [PA-HAN-626](#) or its successor including wearing well-fitting source control (if tolerated), maintaining physical distancing from others, and not lingering in common spaces when moving from their rooms to the visitation space.

9. COMMENT ON THE USE OF ZONES

Previous guidance in PA-HAN-570 outlined three zones to conceptualize the cohorting of residents in response to outbreak testing results. The Zones refer to units or in some cases, entire facilities where staff and residents were cohorting by whether they were unexposed or recovered from COVID-19 (Green zone), in quarantine (Yellow zone), or in isolation (Red zone).

Residents with confirmed COVID-19 infection should be placed in the COVID Care Unit (Red zone) under isolation as described in [PA-HAN-624](#) or its successor.

When using a close-contact approach to outbreak response, the Zones will have limited utility. Circumstances where units or facilities might be considered zones as outlined in PA-HAN-570 could include:

- For admission units designated for residents **who are not up to date with all recommended COVID-19 vaccine doses** (Yellow zone); or
- A unit-based or facility-wide approach to outbreak response where all residents are undergoing quarantine (Yellow zone) because none are **up to date**, or the facility has been advised to do so to respond to an outbreak with ongoing transmission.

To implement Zone-based guidance in your facility, refer to guidance in PA-HAN-570. For all other outbreak response approaches where a mixture of quarantine and non-quarantine for residents might occur on a single unit, Transmission-Based Precautions, room restrictions, and other quarantine measures must be assigned to the care of each individual resident. **Regardless of the approach for contact tracing and quarantine, residents with confirmed COVID-19 infection should be placed in the COVID Care Unit (Red Zone).**

If you have questions about this guidance, please contact DOH at 1-877-PA-HEALTH (1-877- 724-3258) or your local health department.

Categories of Health Alert messages:

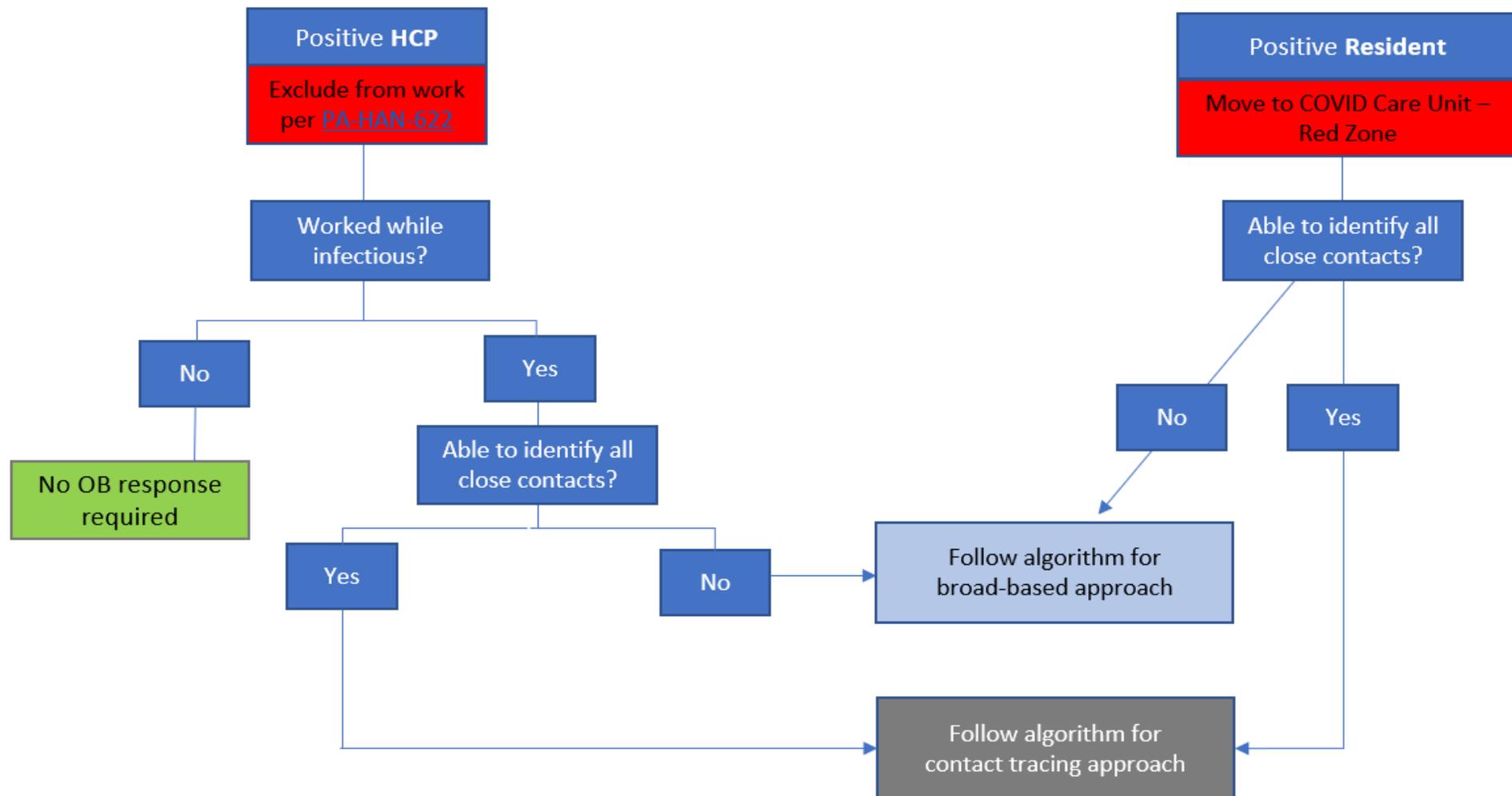
Health Alert: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

Health Advisory: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

Health Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.

This information is current as of February 15, 2022 but may be modified in the future. We will continue to post updated information regarding the most common questions about this subject.

FIGURE 1: CHOOSING AN OUTBREAK RESPONSE METHOD



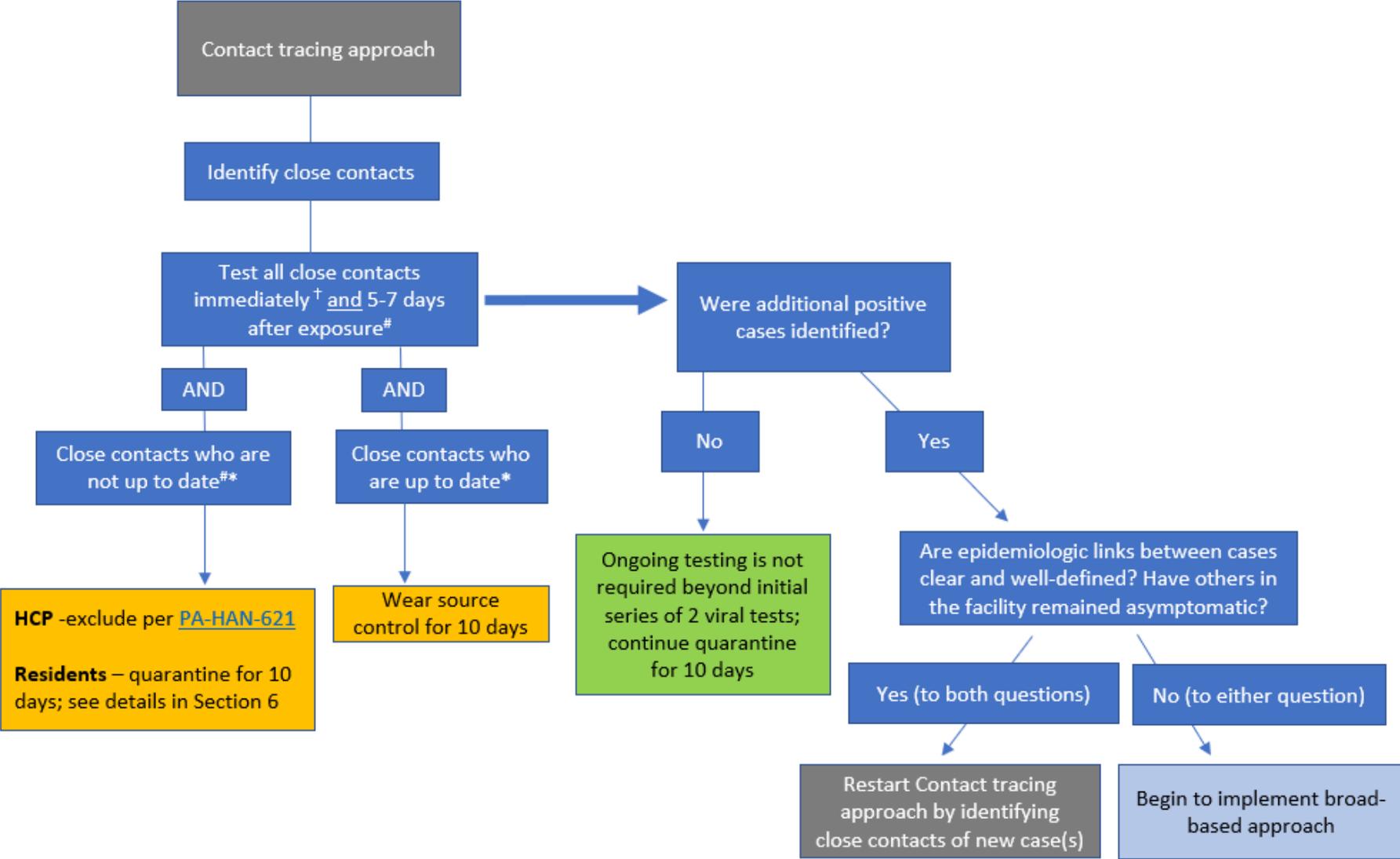
Footnotes:

† Immediately but not sooner than 24 hours after the exposure if the date of a discrete exposure is known.

Generally testing and quarantine are not recommended for residents with SARS-CoV-2 infection in the prior 90 days if they remain asymptomatic. See Sections 6 and 7 for details.

* **Up to date:** In general, being up to date on COVID-19 vaccination includes receiving all vaccines according to the recommendations provided by CDC. This includes a primary series of vaccine, booster doses, and any recommended third doses for immunocompromised people.

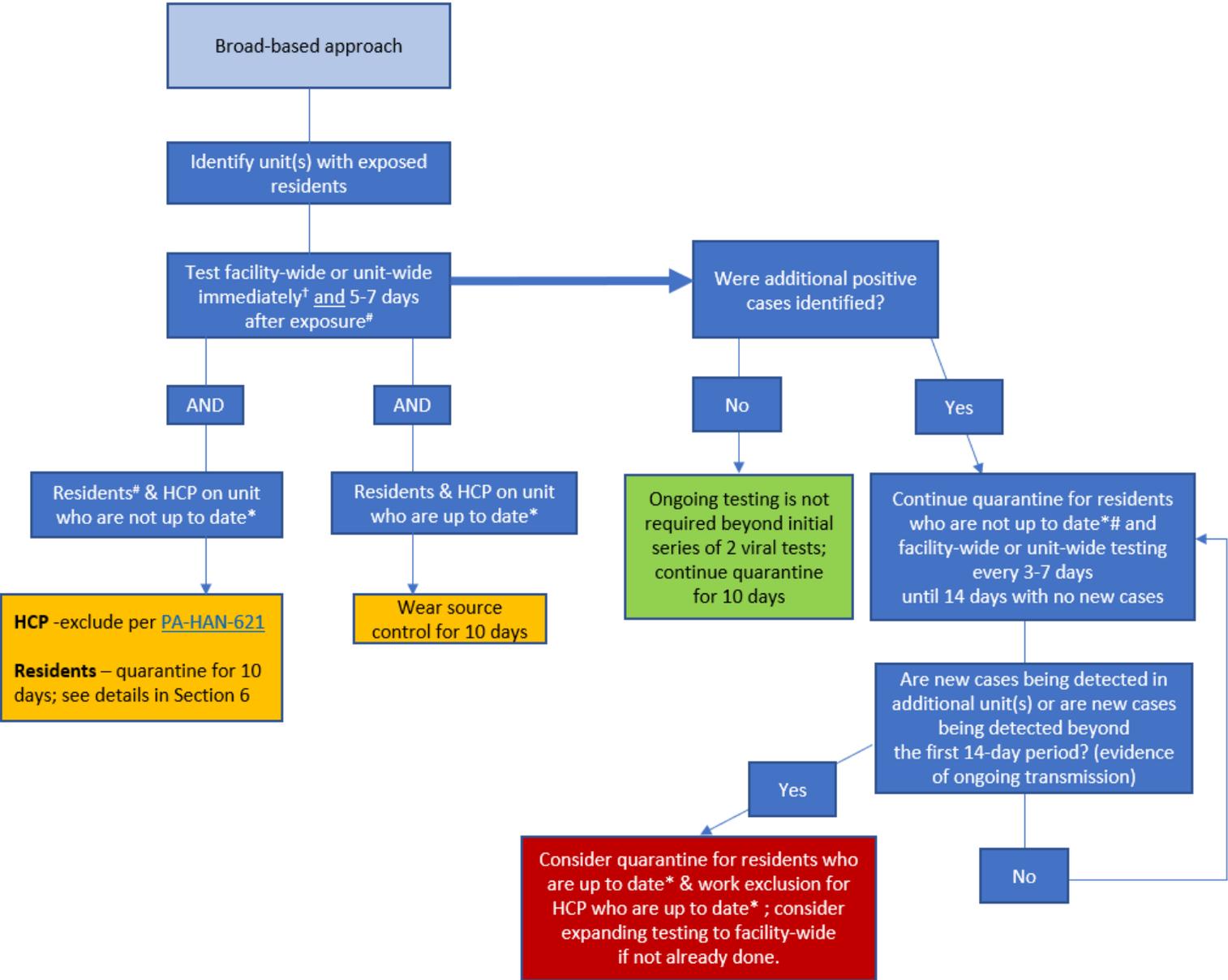
FIGURE 2: IMPLEMENTING A CONTACT-TRACING BASED APPROACH TO OUTBREAK RESPONSE



Footnotes:

† Immediately but not sooner than 24 hours after the exposure if the date of a discrete exposure is known.
 #Generally testing and quarantine are not recommended for residents with SARS-CoV-2 infection in the prior 90 days if they remain asymptomatic. See Sections 6 and 7 for details.
 * **Up to date:** In general, being up to date on COVID-19 vaccination includes receiving all vaccines according to the recommendations provided by CDC. This includes a primary series of vaccine, booster doses, and any recommended third doses for immunocompromised people.

FIGURE 3: IMPLEMENTING A UNIT-BASED OR FACILITY-WIDE APPROACH TO OUTBREAK RESPONSE



Footnotes:

† Immediately but not sooner than 24 hours after the exposure if the date of a discrete exposure is known
 #Generally testing and quarantine are not recommended for residents with SARS-CoV-2 infection in the prior 90 days if they remain asymptomatic. See Sections 6 and 7 for details.
 * **Up to date:** In general, being up to date on COVID-19 vaccination includes receiving all vaccines according to the recommendations provided by CDC. This includes a primary series of vaccine, booster doses, and any recommended third doses for immunocompromised people.