



APIC Consulting ICAR Initiative Safety Statement

The Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH) Healthcare-Associated Infection Prevention and Antimicrobial Stewardship (HAIP/AS) program within the Bureau of Epidemiology has received funding through the Coronavirus Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act to provide each Pennsylvania Skilled Nursing Facility (SNF) with a two-day, facility-based infection prevention and control (IPC) risk assessment, consultation, and training. This is not a facility licensure survey. **This consultative service is free, voluntary and intended to be collaborative and non-punitive.**

The HAIP/AS program has partnered with APIC Consulting Services, the consulting arm of the Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC), to provide consultants with IPC expertise who will conduct the on-site assessment and training activities.

The on-site assessment of infection control practices and policies will be performed at the facility using an enhanced version of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's COVID-specific Infection Control Assessment and Response (ICAR) tool for nursing homes. The assessment involves interviews or discussions with administrative, infection control, clinical, and environmental staff as well as observations of facility practices.

Participating facilities will receive onsite training as well as a list of recommended activities for improvement from the consultant based on gaps identified in the ICAR. The HAIP/AS team will follow up with facilities to support progress in completing recommendations.

The intent and spirit of this service is to develop collaborative relationships and to provide direct support and resources to build the facility's capacity for robust infection control and response. To support an environment of transparency and open communication, consultants will conduct onsite visits in a non-regulatory capacity; consultants will make their best effort to help facilities correct program deficiencies with a facility-led approach.

However, the safety of residents, staff and visitors is of utmost importance and the Department must reserve all available authorities to respond to any *imminent or serious threat to health and safety*. As such, consultants are instructed to notify the HAIP/AS team in the event they witness safety issues and/or infection control deficiencies that could expose residents or staff to an urgent risk of infectious exposure, bodily and/or psychosocial harm. In the event of such an observation,



the consultant will report the urgent issue to both the facility and the HAIP/AS team so that the appropriate follow-up measures may be taken to correct the issue. This may involve a referral of the issue to Quality Assurance (QA). Overall, it is expected that such reports will be uncommon.

This basic standard to protect resident, staff and community health will enable your facility to benefit from the expert IPC consultation and education services offered by this initiative while also ensuring a safe environment. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact **Emma Badra, Project Manager** at (717) 914-8156.

Thank you for your time and commitment to improving infection prevention and control and supporting resident and staff wellbeing. The HAIP/AS team looks forward to your participation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'SMM', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Sharon Watkins, PhD
State Epidemiologist
Director, Bureau of Epidemiology