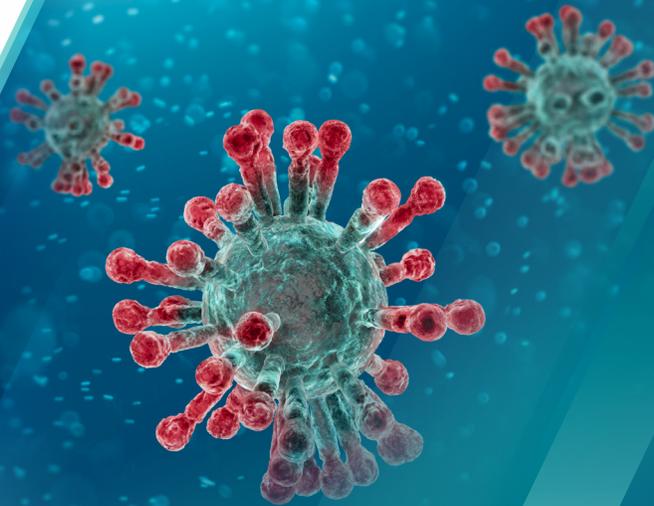


# 5 Standout Infection Control Procedures for Inpatient Rehabilitation



Infection prevention and control measures have become fundamental for facility operations as patients and providers are counting on advanced protocols to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and prevent further outbreaks. Now, more than ever, it's important for patients to be treated in a care setting best suited to their medical needs while also upholding the highest federally-recognized health and safety requirements.

While each post-acute setting provides value, they are not all created equal.<sup>1</sup> **This guide highlights 5 standards upheld by inpatient rehabilitation facilities to combat infection and protect the most vulnerable patients, as well as the benefits these standards offer compared to other care settings.**

## Levels of Care: Comparing Infection Protocols

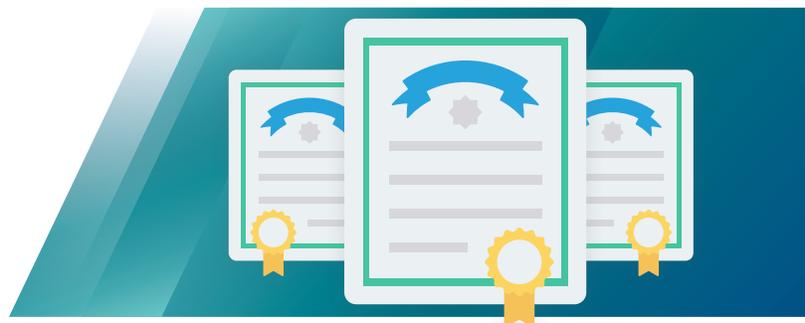
As healthcare leaders continue to adjust facility and care measures to better protect the health and safety of patients, inpatient rehabilitation facilities (IRFs) have quickly adapted to meet the advanced needs of the critically ill and medically complex – including those recovering from COVID-19. As patients are placed in the appropriate care setting, it is important for providers to be aware of the infection protocols that will optimize long-term patient recovery and facility operations.

## 5 Standards IRFs Follow for Effective Infection Control:

### 1 Certification

Many of the certifications set forth by federal programs and agencies are to ensure that standards of patient care are consistently met, including areas of quality and safety. IRFs require a set of strict guidelines to operate, which ultimately benefit all patients who receive care in these settings:

- IRFs are certified as general post-acute care hospitals, and must comply with the same health and safety requirements as acute hospitals. Through their conditions of participation (CoPs) guidelines, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) set the infection control standards expected of IRFs in order to participate in the Medicare program.<sup>2</sup>
- IRFs must also meet state licensure requirements to ensure they can effectively manage the extensive care needs of critically ill, medically complex patients who require a longer recovery period. These patients must be able to participate in a multi-disciplinary comprehensive rehabilitation program consisting of at least three hours of therapy a day, five days a week.



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## 2 Staffing

Appropriate staffing, including physician involvement and nursing expertise, is key to overseeing a medically complex patient population. IRFs are equipped with the staffing resources necessary to provide 24/7 care under the guidelines set forth by CMS, as well as additional guidelines established at the facility level to ensure there are personnel fully dedicated to infection control. Key benefits of these advanced staffing guidelines include:

- **Through the CMS Medicare program, IRFs require daily physician oversight and a 24/7 RN presence.** Other post-acute settings, like skilled nursing facilities (SNFs), limit requirements to eight hours of RN coverage daily, LPN/LVN 24-hour presence, and a physician visit during the first 30 days, with one visit every subsequent 60 days.
- **IRFs feature hospital-level infection control overseen by an Infection Control Officer.** Other post-acute settings typically employ a part-time infection preventionist to manage infection control – increasing the possibility for infection and future outbreaks throughout the facility.
- **In addition to the physician-led interdisciplinary care,** patients at IRFs also have immediate access to credentialed, infectious disease physicians and other specialists.

## 3 Employee Protection

As the regulations for personal protective equipment (PPE) continue to ramp up based on the care setting, IRFs can rely on their long-standing practices of infectious disease control and treatment, infection prevention and promotion of safety at the highest level. Furthermore, IRFs participate in ongoing education regarding preventing and minimizing the spread of viruses and infections. Some of these efforts include:

- **Competencies and special employee training are built in at IRFs** to address myriad multi-drug resistant organisms, viruses and infections in order to prevent or minimize their spread.
- **Many IRF systems have a well-established and robust PPE supply chain** with standard best practices to react to a full range of infections and communicable diseases. For instance, Kindred Healthcare has utilized its well-established and robust supply chain with standard best practices to react to a full range of infections and diseases on behalf of its partner facilities.

## 4 Patient Safety

In addition to well-established PPE best practices and infection control training resources available for employees, IRFs also have additional guidelines in place to protect the patient. From air quality to full service testing areas, IRFs are engineered to prioritize patient safety at all times. Some of these standards, often unseen in other care settings, include:

- **Protocols to isolate infected patients, negative pressure rooms (which are specially designed to reduce viral spread), dedicated teams that monitor for outbreaks and multiple levels of protective gear.**
- **On-site laboratories, dialysis, radiology, intensive care units, surgical suites and negative pressure isolation rooms that enable IRFs to meet a full range of patient needs without relying on outpatient services.** Patients who access these services within an IRF can minimize their risk of additional exposure and spread.
- **IRF licensing requires hospital-quality air filtration systems.** Care settings such as SNFs have the same air handling/HVAC quality as the average residential home.
- **Utilizing zero-harm processes to help ensure the overall safety of patients is met.** Daily safety check-ins on all levels of staff allow for real-time intelligence about potential harm while fostering operational and situational safety awareness.



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## 5 Advanced Clinical Expertise

IRF professionals are leading experts in intensive rehabilitative care, with best-in-class capabilities in returning patients to their abilities prior to their injury or surgery, and discharging them to independence at home. The latest research has demonstrated that IRFs play a vital role in rehabilitation efforts for medically complex patients such as those with stroke, brain injury, spinal cord injury or other neurological conditions.

Kindred Healthcare goes a step further by working with its partner facilities to help them advance their clinical expertise in infection control through several initiatives:

- Kindred has been recognized for its leading antimicrobial stewardship and infection prevention efforts, part of a larger CDC-recognized initiative to improve how antibiotics are prescribed to prevent infection and combat antibiotic resistance.<sup>3</sup>
- Kindred regularly cooperates with state, local and federal agencies, including public health departments, to study and better understand how all healthcare providers can help combat multi-drug resistant organisms and prevent disease spread.

### Sources

1. Nickels, T. (2020, June 24). *AHA Letter on Resetting the IMPACT Act in Next COVID-19 Relief Package*: AHA. Retrieved June 29, 2020, from <https://www.aha.org/lettercomment/2020-06-24-aha-letter-resetting-impact-act-next-covid-19-relief-package>
2. *Hospitals*. (2014). Retrieved July 29, 2020, from <https://www.cms.gov/Regulations-and-Guidance/Legislation/CFCsAndCoPs/Hospitals>
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Kindred Hospital Rehabilitation Services is recognized for its infection prevention efforts and robust PPE supply chain. Coupled with helping partner facilities achieve Joint Commission certification in respiratory failure and sepsis, Kindred's infection protocols enhance the care provided to patients recovering from COVID-19 and other medically complex conditions.

To learn more about how Kindred can help your rehabilitation program achieve the highest levels of infection control and help patients reach their recovery goals in a safe environment, [visit kindredrehab.com](https://www.kindredrehab.com).

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