



February 4, 2022

Director Rochelle Walensky, MD, MPH
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Road
Atlanta, GA 30329

Dear Director Walensky,

On behalf of the Hospice and Palliative Nurses Association (HPNA) and our nearly 10,000 members across the country, I write today to urge the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to reconsider the latest guidance¹ for healthcare settings regarding COVID-19. HPNA nurses who have been steadfastly working on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic believe strongly that the new guidance reducing the quarantine and isolation time for healthcare workers who have been exposed to or infected with COVID-19 offers insufficient protection for both providers and patients and will lead to an increase in COVID-19 exposures and infections.

HPNA members make patient care their first priority while tending to the most seriously ill. By shortening the required time for healthcare providers infected with COVID-19 to be isolated from 10 to five days, the CDC increases exponentially the chances that patients with compromised immune systems will contract COVID-19. The possibility of healthcare providers exposing and infecting each other is also increased by this reduction in quarantine/isolation time. Protecting patients and colleagues is of the utmost importance to hospice and palliative nurses.

Furthermore, there is not suitable scientific evidence that five days is an adequate length of isolation for symptomatic healthcare providers, or that asymptomatic providers with a positive test are incapable of infecting their patients or fellow healthcare providers. Even in a contingency or crisis situation, the safety of patients and providers must be guarded by evidence-based guidelines.

The Omicron variant has led to an astounding increase in positive cases of COVID-19, and loosened work restrictions could intensify these already daunting numbers. This will only exacerbate healthcare workforce shortages at a time when nurses and other healthcare providers are leaving the health workforce in record numbers due to burnout and illness. HPNA previously sent a letter to Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra, urging him to take action to address the nursing workforce crisis (October 19, 2021). The CDC must consider the unintended consequences of relaxing the work restrictions at this critical time. Hospice and palliative nurses must be protected from contracting COVID-19 and spreading it to their already immunocompromised patients. We urge the CDC to reconsider the Interim Guidance for Managing Healthcare Personnel with SARS-CoV-2 Infection or Exposure to SARS-CoV-2 and enact more stringent quarantine and isolation times for healthcare providers exposed to or infected with COVID. It is the responsibility of the CDC to provide evidence-based protections for the brave men and women on the front lines of the pandemic.

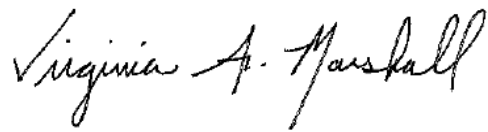
¹ CDC Guidance released December 23, 2021: [Interim Guidance for Managing Healthcare Personnel with SARS-CoV-2 Infection or Exposure to SARS-CoV-2 | CDC](#)

We look forward to working with you and your office on this vital matter. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out to Chad Reilly, MBA, CAE, Senior Vice President, Credentialing and Health Policy, at 412-787-9320 or by email at ChadR@HPNA.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "H. Martinez".

Holli Martinez, MSN, FNP-BC, ACHPN, FPCN
HPNA Board President

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Virginia A. Marshall".

Virginia (Ginger) Marshall, MSN, ACNP-BC, ACHPN, FPCN
Chief Executive Officer, HPNA