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Governor

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Commissioner



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June 12, 2020

To: Assisted Housing Facilities (Assisted Living, Residential Care and PNMI)

Re: Resident Healthcare guidance:

As the Covid-19 Pandemic continues and we are seeing more cases in Assisted Housing facilities, we are sending out this notice of guidance to assist providers by highlighting some proactive steps each facility should consider to be better prepared in the event your facility is faced with an outbreak.

The following interventions should be conducted in an effort to be proactive and prepared should an outbreak occur:

- **Establish relationship(s) with Home Health Services proactively:** Facilities should establish relationships with Home Health Care Services (HHCS) providers within their area that are available to provide medical care to their residents. Facilities should determine what resources (does the HHCS provide 24/7 staff support to a resident if needed) and assistance the HHCS can provide to the facility in the event of an outbreak, and if the HHCS has physicians, Nurse Practitioners, or Physician Assistants who can provide resident assessments for determination of needed Home Health Services in lieu of transferring the resident to the hospital for an evaluation. Facilities should also establish from residents or guardians a preference for providers prior to an identified need.
- **Establish resident and guardian preferences for Home Health Services proactively:** Facilities should proactively establish the resident/guardian preferences for Home Health Care Services and Hospice services providers. During the time of the pandemic it is permissible to give residents/guardians a list of HHCS and Hospice providers that the facility has determined will provide timely on-site services and coordination with the facility for resident needs.

- **Work with Resident physicians to establish standing orders for COVID testing and oxygen:** Facilities should obtain a standing order for resident testing and oxygen utilization based on symptoms or identified exposure. This will allow for testing individual residents quickly in the event of symptoms or identified exposure. In the event a resident or staff member does have a COVID positive test, the facility should contact the Maine CDC Epi program to obtain the assistance of an Epidemiologist in determining if universal testing is warranted through the Maine CDC. Facilities should establish agreements for oxygen concentrator deliveries with appropriate vendors and HHCS to expedite delivery of oxygen concentrators in the event of need.

- **Assisted Housing Facilities should contact one of the Maine Healthcare Coalitions for guidance and assistance in setting up a preplanning meeting/conference call(s) with the local hospital, EMS transport services, and local nursing facilities to establish a plan for the best way to handle a potential outbreak in the facility.** The Healthcare Coalitions can help Assisted Housing facilities with coordination and guidance to facilitate:
 - Discussions with the local hospital to establish if the hospital has the ability to send a provider to the facility to conduct assessments of the residents and determine what medical needs exist such as the need for Home Health Care Services, need for oxygen, need for hospital or nursing facility admission.
 - Discussions and planning with the local nursing facilities and their Medical Directors to establish a process for admitting an Assisted Housing resident who is COVID positive and needs nursing-level care which cannot be provided by Home Health Care Services at the Assisted Housing facility. Current CMS waivers do not require hospital stay prior to admission to a nursing facility.
 - Discussions and planning with the Home Health Care Services that the facility has established relationships with to plan for the level of services the HHCS can provide (can the HHCS provide 24/7 staffing for a HHCS client to meet medical needs), does the HHCS coordinate oxygen if needed for patients and how quickly can that be obtained, does the HHCS provide a service for obtaining COVID samples from residents and staff to send to a lab for testing purposes, etc.
 - Discussions with the local EMS service regarding possible transport needs in the event of an outbreak and process for notification of suspected COVID to ensure EMS staff take proper precautions.

Contact information for Maine Healthcare Coalition Coordinators is:

1. Healthcare Coalition of Northern Maine: Megan Melville 207-747-9139
2. Healthcare Coalition of Central Maine: Mike Hatch 207-747-8100
3. Healthcare Coalition of Southern Maine: Allyssa Caron 207-747-9546
4. Healthcare Coalitions of Maine Coordinator and Webmaster: Hannah James 207-747-9318

Assisted Housing facilities should also be in contact with their local Public Health Liaison, and local County Emergency Management Agency in order to ensure their own outbreak plans are consistent with County and local public health plans. Issues such as where to go for assistance with personal protective equipment (PPE), how to develop internal isolation/cohorting and crisis staffing plans, and how to obtain an epidemiology consult should all be addressed as part of a facility's preplan before an outbreak occurs. Getting acquainted with the local Public Health Liaison, Local Health Care Coalition, and local County Emergency Management Agency should be part of that planning

Again, please take the time to plan for an outbreak in your facility and establish these crucial relationships and plans now, before an outbreak occurs and you are in a crisis. Please monitor the CDC guidance at least daily as this continues to unfold and please review the CDC guidance on "Considerations for Preventing Spread of COVID-19 in Assisted Living Facilities" at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/assisted-living.html> .

Please feel free to contact Gretchen Zeh-Higgins, RN, Long Term Care Facilities Supervisor with The Office of Aging and Disability Services (gretchen.zeh-higgins@maine.gov) or Heather Hyatt, LSW Assisted Housing/Behavioral Health Program Manager, with the Division of Licensing and Certification (Heather.Hyatt@maine.gov) if there are questions regarding this notice.

Sincerely,

Paul Saucier, Director
The Office of Aging and Disability Services

Bill Montejo, Director
Division of Licensing & Certification