



Maine Health Care Association

MHCA Statement on Coronavirus and Maine Long Term Care Facilities' Efforts and Work to Keep Residents Safe – April 13, 2020

"For the trained health care professionals at Maine's nursing homes and assisted living facilities, the safety and well-being of residents and staff is always the highest priority. As predicted, cases are now being seen in some of Maine's long-term care facilities. Maine providers are following, if not exceeding, CDC guidelines to prevent or contain the spread within their buildings. They are in close communication with the Maine CDC, DHHS and other local and state agencies to ensure they are taking the appropriate steps at this time.

Our members are diligently focused on minimizing the potential coronavirus risks by continuing strong preventive actions; utilizing fundamental infection control protocols; restricting visitation; continuing daily and routine staff screening for symptoms; practicing social distancing for staff and residents as practicable, and following federal and state recommendations to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

In facilities where cases exist, additional steps are being taken, such as isolating or co-horting residents who've tested positive in private rooms or areas; minimizing the number of interactions among different staff and residents; increased monitoring of staff and residents; providing comfort and encouragement to residents and to the extent possible, increasing transmission-based precautions commensurate with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) supply.

MHCA and its members are gravely concerned about the shortage of PPE in general, and in long term care specifically. The level of PPE in a long term care facility directly impacts its ability to prevent and contain this deadly virus. It also factors heavily into the admission decision making process. MHCA continues to advocate that long term care facilities be a top priority for PPE procurement, given what we know about the risks to our frail, elderly residents, many of whom have underlying health conditions. While we are aware of some PPE distribution by the Maine CDC, our facilities need more as the surge continues in long term care. Knowing that government stockpiles are limited, members have procured PPE from private manufacturers and donations, while conserving this precious resource in accordance with CDC guidelines. These measures will be less effective if widespread surge occurs.

MHCA remains in close contact with its nursing home and assisted living members, providing information and resources, which are changing daily. MHCA applauds provider response during this unprecedented public health crisis. The commitment, engagement, communication and support displayed by our providers is commendable. The dedication and courage of the employees on the front lines have been remarkable, but not surprising, as these heroes have been making a difference in the lives of Maine's elderly and disabled citizens for years. Lastly, we continue to work with the Maine Department of Health and Human Services, the Maine CDC and other state and national partners to monitor the virus and communicate updated information to our members."

Richard A. Erb
President and CEO