PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY

March 24, 2020

Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19): Guidance for Long-Term Care Facilities

Situation Update

There are now 53 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Marin County. Due to limited testing, this number is an underestimate of the prevalence of COVID-19. Newly diagnosed cases show that local transmission is increasing. Outbreaks of COVID-19 in long-term care facilities (LTCF), including skilled nursing facilities, assisted living facilities, independent living facilities, and residential care homes (i.e., board and care facilities) will have a critical impact on vulnerable older adults. Older residents of LTCFs appear to be particularly at risk for rapid transmission of and severe disease from COVID-19, including death.

Recommendations

Marin County Public Health recommends that all long-term care facilities take immediate steps to increase readiness for COVID-19 outbreaks by activating emergency operations and rapidly implementing the following actions:

1. Plan and Prepare for COVID-19
   a. Assign a person(s) responsible for implementing the following COVID-19 prevention activities and reporting to Public Health. Update contact information in California Health Alert Network (CAHAN). If you need assistance, email MHOAC@marincounty.org.
   c. Review your facility’s emergency operations, medical surge, pandemic influenza plans/flu plans.
      i. Put alcohol-based hand sanitizer in every resident room (ideally both inside and outside of the room) and ensure a stable supply.
      ii. Make sure tissues, wipes, and waste receptacles are widely available and all sinks are well-stocked with soap and paper towels for hand washing.
      iii. Post signs on the door or wall outside of the resident room that clearly describe the type of precautions needed and required PPE.
      iv. Make PPE, including facemasks, eye protection, gowns, and gloves, available immediately outside of the resident room.
      v. Position a trash can near the exit inside any resident room to make it easy for employees to discard PPE.
      vi. Discourage Non-Essential Resident Movement. Whenever a Residential Facility resident must leave the Residential Facility
Premises, the resident is ordered to comply with the Marin County Public Health Shelter-In-Place order.

vii. Suspend recreational activities and congregational dining. Provide in-room/apartment dining if feasible.

viii. Implement plan to restrict COVID-19 cases to certain rooms, dedicated wings or areas.

2. Resident, Staff and Essential Visitor Management
   a. Exclude Visitors and Non-Essential Personnel including visitors of residents (includes family members of residents and authorized decision-makers).
   b. Staff and Essential Visitors (e.g., medical personnel) should wear surgical / isolation masks. Staff should wear a mask when within 6 feet of residents. Require Essential Visitors to wear a mask throughout their visit.
      i. Conserve personal protective equipment (PPE) [e.g., reuse masks].
   c. Ensure that your sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidance and that employees are aware of these policies.

3. Screening and Surveillance
   a. Implement a screening program where all Staff and Essential Visitors are actively checked prior to entry for temperature and symptoms of respiratory infection.
      i. Staff with any symptom (even just cough) should not report to work or enter the facility until 3 days after their symptoms have resolved.
   b. Actively monitor and assess all residents daily, including new residents, for symptoms of respiratory infection, temperature, and oxygenation.
      i. Maintain list of primary care providers for all residents.
      ii. Ensure supply of thermometers, pulse oximetry, and blood pressure monitors.
      iii. Confirm residents’ and/or their authorized proxies know how to contact their primary care provider.
      iv. Contact residents’ primary care provider if patient develops signs and symptoms consistent with COVID-19. Provide care at the Facility unless it is a medical emergency.
      v. If transport is thought to be needed, contact appropriate hospital immediately to discuss transfer.
   v. Ensure POLST updated and available for Emergency Medical Services (EMS) responders.

4. Infection Control Procedures
   a. Restrict residents with fever or acute respiratory symptoms to their room. They should be moved to a private room if not in one. If they must leave the room for medically necessary procedures, have them wear a facemask.
   b. Any resident with respiratory symptoms should receive care from dedicated staff using appropriate infection prevention practices.
   c. Adhere to infection control guidelines for any resident with respiratory illness. Use Standard, Contact, and Droplet Precautions with eye protection unless suspected diagnosis requires Airborne Precautions (e.g., tuberculosis).
d. Identify dedicated Staff to care for COVID-19 cases and provide these employees with infection control training.

5. Education and Training
   a. Provide education for residents, families, authorized proxies, and staff on advanced care planning, including Advance Directives, Physician Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment (POLST), and palliative care.
   b. Ensure core infection control staff complete Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Nursing Home Infection Preventionist Training.

6. Notify and Communicate
   a. If a resident becomes ill with respiratory illness, consult their primary care physician prior to transferring (unless it is medical emergency).
   b. Notify facilities prior to transferring a resident with any acute respiratory illness, including suspected or confirmed COVID-19, to another facility, including a higher level of care.
   c. Report any possible COVID-19 illness in residents or employees to Marin County Public Health.

California Department of Public Health (CDPH) Guidance

- Guidance for Limiting the Transmission of COVID-19 in Long-Term Care Facilities (AFL 20-22.1)
- Preparing for Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in California Skilled Nursing Facilities (AFL 20-25.1)

Additional Information

World Health Organization (WHO). https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus


California Department of Public Health (CDPH). https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/nCOV2019.aspx

Marin Health and Human Services https://www.marinhhs.org/coronavirus-health-care-providers

Sincerely,

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