

Summary of September 30, 2020 meeting
Between DPH and Nursing Homes and Assisted Living Services Agencies
The notes below summarize information shared by DPH with Nursing Homes and Assisted Living Agencies on the weekly industry call. Information is subject to change week to week. Facilities should always consult DPH, CDC and CMS guidance for the most up-to-date information.

Nursing Homes:

Survey findings over the last week.

- There were 46 visits conducted from 9/24 to 9/30.
- During these visits the following findings were noted:
 - Inappropriate mask use in a presumptive positive unit;
 - Staff testing not in 100% compliance;
 - Transmission based precautions and PPE not used appropriately;
 - Appropriate cohorting (i.e. nurse administering medications started in the COVID positive unit first, instead of starting with the COVID negative unit).
 - Newly diagnosed positive resident's spouse was not transferred to a "watch" unit in a timely manner;
 - Screening questionnaire when staff and visitors were entering the facility was not filled out appropriately, when a person responded to the affirmative, no action was taken;
 - Adequate PPE was not supplied appropriate for the unit, face shields for staff use were noted to be soiled;
 - Staff testing, tracking was not comprehensive as to when staff testing was initiated;
- It is important for staff to follow appropriate protocols, especially when indoor visitation is taking place, including screening and appropriate PPE use especially covering the nose and mouth with the mask.

Nursing Home Outbreak Trends:

- Currently, there are 22 facilities that have never seen COVID-19 in staff or residents.
- We are particularly concerned about facilities that have never seen a COVID positive resident, as they are potentially at risk for rapid spread of a COVID-19 outbreak. Naïve facilities might not have a "buffer" or previously infected individuals, and we have seen some larger outbreaks in naïve facilities that has led to difficulty with cohorting.
- It is important that when facilities have a positive case, testing of all residents and staff should be completed ASAP using either PCR care partner testing, or antigen testing as directed by the Department.
- The Department is continuing to review the outbreaks to determine the cause of spread.
- Even though facilities may be experiencing COVID fatigue, it is important to keep up with their source control measures.
- Dr. Leung provided a presentation of the outbreaks taking place in the nursing homes around the state. The presentation showed the number of COVID positive cases increasing in the past 2 weeks.
- Data is updated on a weekly basis.

COVID Free Facilities and COVID Staff Only Positives:

- Ed Baker, Administrator from Miller Memorial provided best practice tips for the members present on the call. Information included:
 - Residents in the facility are all COVID negative.

- They have had a total of 8 staff test positive, who were direct care staff.
- Using best practices for source control, no residents have been infected.
- All Department heads are required to do unannounced visits on all three shifts, including weekends to ensure staff are following appropriate PPE and mask use.
- They have open communication with staff. Staff can report any potential symptoms with their supervisor and they will be taken out of direct patient care until they had the opportunity to be tested.
- The facility had the opportunity to stop testing but chose to keep testing.
- Their success story includes proper surveillance and appropriate use of PPE.

CMS Visitation Memorandum

- The Department sent out a blast fax on September 23, 2020, reiterating the recommendation for facilities to follow CMS visitation requirements and rescinding the Commissioner's visitation orders.
- Facilities need to understand the importance of appropriate PPE use and other measures outlined in the Core principals of COVID-19 prevention.
- Facilities experiencing an outbreak and conducting outbreak testing should only allow indoor visitation for compassionate care visits only.
- Facilities should make their own judgement call as to safe indoor visitation but should not unrealistically restrict visitation.
- Facilities are encouraged to work with families to ensure they understand the visitation policies and their measures to keep residents and staff safe.

Commissioner's PPE Stockpile Order:

Commissioner's order.

- The Commissioner's order from September 24, 2020, mandates all facilities to have a stockpile of PPE put aside for use during an outbreak.
- Facilities should have enough reserve PPE and hand sanitizer to manage an outbreak of twenty percent (20%) of the facility's average daily census for a thirty (30) day period.
- Facilities need to check their inventory on a monthly basis to: (1) ensure they have enough PPE, and (2) replace expired or expiring PPE and store the stockpile on site or off site in an accessible place.
- The deadline to comply with the order is October 16th.
- The Department created an attestation form, which will be available on the FLIS web portal and will reiterate the requirements of the Order.

Requisition for emergency PPE needs.

- The Department created an online requisition-based system for facilities to request assistance with PPE supplies when they anticipate their stock on hand will be less than 72 hours, and they do not have the ability to source through their own vendors.
- Once PPE is requested by the facility, DPH assigns staff to evaluate and complete the request.
- A blast fax with instructions on how to use the system will be sent out to facilities.

Nursing Homes and Assisted Living Services Agencies Joint Issues:

Testing.

- Over the last week, through the Care Partner data, the cumulative total number of tests performed was 263,000 for residents and staff. 31,000 tests were performed last week.

- Some homes have moved from surveillance testing (monthly) to outbreak testing (weekly), 112 nursing homes have been testing monthly.
- The testing program is continued until December 31, 2020. The Department is working on extending the Care Partner contracts.

Care Partners.

- The Department meets weekly with Care Partners, both individually and as a group, where various issues and best practices are discussed.
- The Department understands that Care Partners may have difficulty testing in a timely manner due to scheduling issues during outbreak testing. In these cases, the Department encourages using antigen machines for testing.
- The Department is setting up an online portal to report any complaints regarding Care Partner issues.

Antigen Testing

- Reporting.
 - Assisted Living Services Agencies should report any test results daily to LTC Map, which are reviewed daily by the Department.
 - Nursing homes report their numbers daily into the FLIS portal, which are reviewed by the Department daily.
 - Nursing homes report at least weekly to NHSN.
 - The Department is in the process of revising the portal to include PCR or antigen testing separately.
 - New guidance and directions for using the portal will be shared with facilities.
 - The Department shared the guidance provided to all physicians and APRNs for using antigen testing. The Guidance included information about any limitations to using antigen testing as it works best for testing symptomatic individuals and retesting individuals who were previously positive.
 - Facilities and healthcare providers need to follow manufacturer directions for collecting specimens.
 - All facilities who perform antigen testing need to have a CLIA waiver, a webinar has been put in place for information regarding obtaining the waiver.

Assisted Living Services Agencies:

ALSA Survey Findings. There were no findings this week.

Testing Reimbursement.

- Lita reiterated to facilities to submit their invoices ASAP.
- Invoices for testing completed between June 28 through August 31 are due by October 15, 2020.
- The Department uses this data to determine the number of tests performed in the ALSA/MRC and to assess the ongoing availability of funds for the program.
- It is important to open any attachments from the testing vendors to see if the files are accessible/readable before forwarding the invoices to OPM for reimbursement.
- Contact information for OPM to submit invoices:
Manisha Srivastava
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860-418-6317

PPE Support -- Requisition for emergency PPE needs.

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