

Summary of October 14, 2020 Long Term Care 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:

1. Overview of COVID-19 in Connecticut (Lita Orefice/Vivian Leung):

- COVID cases are starting to rise in CT, particularly in New London County/eastern Connecticut.
- Need to be vigilant, infection control (following policies, masks, etc.) – need to continue to follow infection control policies.
- Facilities that haven't seen COVID cases need to be particularly vigilant.
- Family gatherings seem to be a contributing factor of transmission.
- DPH is reaching out to nursing homes with no cases in eastern Connecticut for targeted consultation.
- Cases in nursing homes have increased since September.
- DPH recognizes increased transmission risks when staff members work in multiple facilities and encourages facilities to know which of their staff members fall into this category. Facilities should consider extra infection control consultation and possible extra testing for such staff.
- Facilities should remind all staff to wear masks and practice social distancing when outside the facility (e.g. in parking lots or if socializing after work).

2. Infection Control Issues:

- **Survey Findings (Kim Hriceniak/Donna Ortelle):** 35 infection control visits – 4 findings identified:
 - Wandering out of room
 - Screening of visitors (visitors allowed to enter)
 - Therapy staff – not wearing appropriate PPE
 - Inadequate cleaning of face shields
- **Nursing Home Outbreak Trends (Vivian):** No specific trends at this time (within the past week)

3. Commissioner's PPE Stockpile Order (Lita)

- Commissioner's Order requires facilities to maintain a reserve stockpile of PPE equal to the amount of PPE necessary to manage an outbreak of 20% of the facility's average daily census for 30 days.
- Facilities must complete and set aside stockpile by October 16th.
- 77 facilities have attested they have their stockpiles.
- Some facilities are reporting difficulties in acquiring N95 masks and gloves.
- DPH will allow reasonable requests for extensions to the Order and will be developing an Extension Request Form – to include what facility has and what is needed to complete stockpile.
- Stockpiles are not to be used for everyday supply of PPE, only when there is an outbreak.
- Stockpile – facilities are individually responsible for their own stockpile and should not request PPE from the state to complete their stockpiles.

4. PPE Online Ordering Portal (Donna):

- 84 facilities have attested since this morning (up from 77 reported earlier)
- Portal is being monitored
- Complete request (dphsubmission.ct.gov)
- When request is approved an email will be sent/call made asking facility to either pick up supply or if a large supply, will be delivered
- Surjit has completed Submissions Systems – planning to add 2 more fields

5. Nursing Students (Barbara Cass)

- Schools are in session
- Link to Blast Fax addressing nursing students
- Nursing homes need to make decisions regarding allowing nursing students coming to facilities

6. Reminder about Flu Vaccine (Barbara)

- We are in flu season, facilities need to offer flu vaccines

7. COVID-19 Vaccine Planning (Lita)

- Federal government will be contacting facilities soon regarding distribution COVID vaccines. Please be on the lookout for communications directly from the federal government.

8. Surge Staffing Planning and Proposed Summit (Lita)

- DPH is working with the associations to host a virtual Staffing Summit to help facilities with issues related to staffing during an outbreak and to come up with ideas.

Joint Nursing Home and Assisted Living

9. Testing General (Lita)

- Testing general data: 310,000 tests performed through the Care Partner program through this week.
- Nursing homes: approximately 50% are testing weekly; approximately 50% testing monthly. DPH has asked all facilities in New London County to test weekly, since the level of community spread in that county has been rising.
- State support of the Care Partner Testing Program has been extended to December 30th both for nursing homes and assisted living.
- DPH is working on extending the Care Partner contracts to December 30th.
- DPH is also discussing expanded testing for staff who work in multiple facilities and encourages facilities to know which staff work in multiple facilities.

10. Testing Guidance (Vivian)

- Antigen Testing: “in the works” to deploy in Home Health and Hospice
 - Not much has changed
 - FAQs updated
 - Ordering antigen testing
 - Care Partners capacity is limited, so all nursing homes should be ready to use antigen testing.
- False positive issue is a limited issue – occurs rarely in PCR testing (when there is a problem with lab equipment)
- Not recommending to re-test with antigen for validation of false positives from lab
- Some nursing homes are getting collections over a period of several days – collections need to be submitted as soon as possible (specimens degrade over time)
- Surjit: online ticketing system for assistance with system
- Compliant portal should be used after trying to resolve problem with Care Partner
- **NHSN reporting for antigen testing (Adora)**
 - Submit report for period of 10/7 – 10/13
 - All positive and negative antigen testing reporting coming soon
 - Level 3 security access
 - Module goes live tomorrow
 - Training on October 27 – Reporting Results (line-level reporting). Will send link.
 - NHSN case reporting modules: data should only have new information (do not include previously reported information)
 - NHSN questions about testing strategy

- Testing asymptomatic residents
- Testing asymptomatic facility-wide (i.e. staff members)
- Testing asymptomatic without exposure

Assisted Living

11. ALSA Survey Findings (Loan)

- Continue to contact Infection Control daily
 - In one facility, nurse entered room of COVID patient. Nurse was only wearing a surgical mask (“left N95 at home”); nurse continued working – should quarantine and be tested.

12. Testing Reimbursement (Donna for Barbara)

- Nothing new to report

13. PPE Online Ordering Portal (Donna)

- Ordering for urgent needs (NOT routine)

Questions (during meeting):

- Antigen visitor testing: is it expected to stop? Vivian: if facility wants to continue testing, facility may continue.
- Negative Antigen test in symptomatic person? Keep person separated until PCR test results are received.
- Question regarding glove supply: there is a national shortage of N95 masks and gloves. Are there recommendations how to deal with shortages? We are using CDC standards – N95s can be used up to 5 uses with proper use.