News Release

Gov. Ricketts Announces Shortened Quarantines, Guidance For Essential Caregiver Visitation In Long-Term Care Facilities

For Immediate Release: 12/4/2020

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Governor's Media Release:

LINCOLN – This morning, Governor Pete Ricketts held a press conference at the State Capitol to provide an update on the State's coronavirus pandemic response. The Governor announced that the State of Nebraska has issued new Directed Health Measures (DHMs) to align with CDC recommendations to shorten the length of quarantine required for persons who've had close contact exposure to the coronavirus. The updated DHMs took effect December 3, 2020 at 5:00 PM.

Gov. Ricketts also announced new guidance for long-term care (LTC) facilities to designate “essential caregivers" for their residents. These caregivers may be family members, friends, or volunteers who provided regular support to the

resident before the pandemic. By recognizing them as essential caregivers, LTC facilities can allow these folks to have more regular interactions assisting residents during this time of enhanced restrictions.

The Governor was joined by Becky Wisell, Interim Deputy Director of Health Licensure and Environmental Health for the Division of Public Health in the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). She outlined guidance for LTC facilities to follow with their essential caregiver program. Jenifer Acierno, CEO of LeadingAge Nebraska, talked about the many ways essential caregivers benefit residents in long-term care.

Jim Engelbart, President of the Nebraska Craft Brewers Guild, took part in the press conference to talk about the challenges facing Nebraska's breweries during the pandemic. He shared ways Nebraskans can continue to support the restaurants, bars, and breweries in their community.

Gov. Ricketts: Shortening Length of Quarantine

- The CDC has updated its quarantine guidelines, and we've revised our DHMs to reflect these changes.
- The new DHMs took effect statewide at 5:00 PM on December 3, 2020.
- Quarantine may discontinue without testing under the following conditions:
  - At least ten (10) days have passed since close contact exposure AND
  - No coronavirus symptoms have developed and the person self-monitors for symptoms and wears a facial covering through day 14 since the last close contact
- Quarantine may discontinue with testing under the following conditions:
  - At least seven (7) days have passed since close contact exposure, no coronavirus symptoms have developed AND
  - Results of a diagnostic specimen test (molecular or antigen) is negative that was collected no earlier than five (5) days since last close contact exposure AND

- The person self-monitors for symptoms and wears a facial covering through day 14 since the last close contact

Becky Wisell: Essential Caregiver Guidance

- The Essential Caregiver Guidance document is intended for nursing homes and assisted-living facilities that decide to designate Essential Caregivers in their facilities.
  - An Essential Caregiver is a person who was previously actively engaged with a resident or who is committed to providing companionship and/or assistance with basic activities of daily living.
- The guidance is important because:
  - It provides long-term care facilities with the opportunity to supplement their limited staffing with valuable volunteers who are willing to provide care for residents; and
  - It provides family members and other outside caregivers who have worked with these residents an opportunity to spend more time with them.
- Essential Caregivers have an important role in providing care for residents in nursing homes and assisted-living facilities.
  - Because of their relationships with residents, Essential Caregivers can observe and communicate important details about changes in a resident's condition or behavior;
  - Caregivers provide emotional support to residents and honor the residents' personal values and preferences of care; and
  - Most importantly, Essential Caregivers help promote quality of life for residents.
- LTC facilities must establish policies and procedures for how to designate and utilize an Essential Caregiver. This will take time for facilities to develop; the policies won't immediately be in place.
- Nebraskans should consult the facility's administrator, Director of Nursing, Social Services Director, or other designated facility staff to help

determine who meets the criteria of an Essential Caregiver.

- The resident must be consulted about their wishes to determine whom to designate as the Essential Caregiver.
- The Essential Caregiver Guidance also includes necessary precautions to prevent the spread of coronavirus such as screening Essential Caregivers prior to entering the facility, requiring PPE and frequent hand hygiene, and limiting the number of Essential Caregivers in a facility at one time.
- The Essential Caregiver Guidance for Long-Term Care Facilities can be found on the DHHS website at dhhs.ne.gov/Documents/COVID-19-Long-Term-Care-Essential-Caregiver-Guidance.pdf.

Jenifer Acierno: Essential Caregiver Guidance

- Thanks to DHHS for seeking out options to keep our LTC residents in Nebraska connected the best we can during this challenging time.
- During the pandemic state and federal guidelines have been put in place to protect residents, who are among the most vulnerable to the coronavirus.
- Typically, we like to engage residents with social activity, and we encourage it. But we recognize that these times are not typical.
- Isolation has taken a toll on LTC residents physically, mentally, and emotionally. This program allows for an Essential Caregiver provider to help maintain resident health across that spectrum.
- Essential Caregivers will help to reduce isolation for LTC residents while helping LTC staff with basic activities of caring for a resident.
- The program is voluntary. It allows providers to assess their specific situation and implement the program when it makes the most sense for their residents and their facility. Decisions on if and when to implement a program take account of community spread, availability of staff for screenings, as well as availability of necessary personal protective equipment (PPE). Some LTC facilities may be able to implement an Essential Caregiver program in the next few weeks. Others may have to hold off until a later date.

Jim Engelbart: Supporting Nebraska's Breweries

- At Empyrean Brewing Co. and Lazlo's Brewery and Grill, we went to curbside dining only when the virus broke out.
- Of our breweries in Nebraska, many operate similarly to restaurants.
- Being able to offer curbside and takeout has been essential to all of us as we've gone through the pandemic.
- As breweries, we want to stay open and serve customers, but we very much want to keep our staff safe and employed.
- There are over 50 breweries in operation across Nebraska. Chances are that you live within 50 miles of a brewery if you reside in Nebraska.
- We appreciate the business we're getting during this time. Many breweries have the option to deliver beer directly to your home. You can call to place your order, and many breweries have also added online ordering options.
- This past weekend we celebrated Small Brewery Sunday nationwide. The Governor and many State Senators came out to support Nebraska breweries. We greatly appreciated that.

Video from today's press conference is available by clicking here.

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