NCDHHS

NCDHHS Expands Measures to Prevent and Respond to COVID-19 in Long-term Care Facilities

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The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services is taking further action to prevent and respond to COVID-19 outbreaks in long-term care facilities. All long-term care facilities in the state will receive personal protective equipment (PPE) packs of needed supplies, and facilities will receive a limited increased rate for some Medicaid services to support infection prevention and management.

“We have a team dedicated to supporting our long-term care facilities as they protect our aging family members and loved ones who require round-the-clock care and the staff who care for them,” said NCDHHS Secretary Mandy Cohen, M.D. “We want to help them do all that they can because once an outbreak occurs in a congregate living setting, it can be difficult to prevent the spread of the virus.”

PPE packs will go to more than 3,000 state-licensed long-term care facilities and include a fourteen-day supply of face shields, procedure masks, gloves and shoe covers. Adult care homes, family care homes, nursing homes, intermediate care facilities for individuals with intellectual

disabilities and mental health facilities will receive supplies. NCDHHS is partnering with North Carolina Emergency Management and the National Guard to deliver the packs at local distribution centers.

In addition to the PPE distribution, NCDHHS is providing a time-limited Medicaid rate increase for nursing facility services such as skilled nursing and rehabilitation services. The increase is intended to support strengthening infection prevention and management capacities with technical support from NCDHHS. The increase will also apply to personal care assistance and home health services to help providers who support people being able to stay at home where there is less risk to exposure.

NCDHHS also released updated testing guidance (https://covid19.ncdhhs.gov/about-covid-19/testing) to clinicians that recommends testing people who live in or have regular contact with high-risk settings such as long-term care facilities.

These actions build on earlier measures North Carolina has taken to protect residents and staff in long-term facilities. Previous actions include:

- Issuing Executive Order 130 (https://www.ncdhhs.gov/news/press-releases/governor-cooper-provides-emergency-flexibility-expand-hospital-beds-equipment), which codified public health and safety requirements for nursing homes, including requiring staff to wear surgical masks, screenings for all staff and residents for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 daily and closing communal areas.
- Conducting remote infection prevention and control consultation with skilled nursing and other long-term facilities across the state through a partnership with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the North Carolina Statewide Program for Infection Control and Epidemiology.
- Providing targeted funding to support nursing homes and adult care homes to provide the more intensive care needed for residents with COVID-19 and limit the spread of the virus to other residents and staff.
- Providing a toolkit to support long-term care facilities in preparing for and responding to COVID-19 outbreaks in their facility. The toolkit contains an infection control assessment, infection staffing worksheet, infection prevention educational resources and other tools.
- Helping to fill staffing shortages in long-term care facilities and other health care facilities through a partnership with East Carolina University School of Nursing to match Registered Nurses and Certified Nursing Assistants with facilities, particularly long-term care facilities, that are seeking to urgently hire staff for temporary, part-time or full-time roles. Interested health care employees can register at nc.readyop.com/fs/4cjq/697b (https://nc.readyop.com/fs/4cjq/697b) .

- Implementing several temporary regulatory changes to assist providers in caring for their residents during the COVID-19 pandemic, including adopting an emergency rule granting reciprocity to nurse aides certified in other states to work as nurse aides in North Carolina, and allowing facilities to exceed the number of licensed beds if needed to provide temporary shelter and services to adequately care for residents with COVID-19.
- Providing virtual trainings for more than 2,000 staff working in long-term care sites. Trainings are available online at www.ncahec.net/covid-19/webinars (https://www.ncahec.net/covid-19/webinars/) .

For NCDHHS and CDC guidance for long-term care facilities visit covid19.ncdhhs.gov/guidance#long-term-care-facilities (https://covid19.ncdhhs.gov/guidance#long-term-care-facilities). A list of congregate care settings with outbreaks is available on the NCDHHS COVID-19 Dashboard. (https://covid19.ncdhhs.gov/dashboard#by-congregate-living)

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