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Illinois Department of Public Health Files Emergency Rules Mandating COVID-19 Testing in Long-Term Care Facilities

SPRINGFIELD – Today, the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) filed emergency rules mandating long-term care facilities comply with infection control practices, including testing all residents and staff for COVID-19. Each facility will be required to develop and implement a testing plan to better protect vulnerable residents and ensure no facility is shirking its responsibilities for those in their care.

"Nursing home residents are at higher risk for infection, serious illness, and death from COVID-19," said IDPH Director Dr. Ngozi Ezike. "Testing residents and health care staff is important to help keep COVID-19 out of facilities if the virus is not there, detect cases quickly – especially among individuals who are asymptomatic, and stop transmission. While many facilities are working with IDPH and their local health departments to help keep residents safe, we cannot rely on voluntary compliance alone, and this additional regulatory authority will help ensure swift action."

IDPH is requiring every long-term care facility in Illinois to test all residents and staff for COVID-19 as recommended by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Each facility will collect specimens and arrange with a laboratory to have them tested. IDPH will provide training and assistance with testing if needed and will help identify laboratory services if requested. Each facility will be required to report to public health officials the number of residents and staff tested, and the number of positive, negative, and indeterminate test results.

The facility must also make sure a copy of the facility's infection control policies and procedures is provided to residents, and to the resident's family or representative, along with IDPH or local health departments, upon request.

To date, IDPH laboratories have provided 45,000 testing kits to 170 long term care facilities. IDPH has an agreement with Quest Laboratories, which has so far provided 8,500 testing kits to 33 long term care facilities. IDPH will provide additional testing kits to long-term care facilities that choose to work with IDPH to implement their testing plan.

IDPH will continue to work with local health departments to provide guidance and support for infection control practices at long-term care facilities, perform targeted infection control surveys, provide consulting services to facilities, and coordinate with partners t

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