News Release

Date: March 9, 2020

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DHS staff to visit care facilities statewide reinforcing illness prevention

(Salem, Ore.) –The Oregon Department of Human Services has designated a licensing oversight team assigned to launch illness-prevention reviews at all nursing, assisted living and residential care communities statewide, including those providing memory care, beginning today. The specialized reviews will focus on pandemic response plans and infection control procedures.

This statewide inspection initiative is designed to help prevent the spread of coronavirus, or COVID-19, in facilities that care for Oregonians who are among those most susceptible to the virus.

The DHS Office of Aging and People with Disabilities, which has regulatory oversight of long-term care providers in Oregon, assembled the team of more than 70 individuals to conduct these reviews at approximately 670 facilities statewide. In the process of doing reviews, the team will provide technical assistance to facilities on infection control and emergency planning if it is determined that is needed.

“We are dedicated to doing everything possible to work in partnership with care providers to protect vulnerable Oregonians,” said DHS Director Fariborz Pakseresht.

While DHS is prioritizing facilities that serve older adults and people with disabilities, the agency also will review emergency plans for other facilities it oversees, such as children’s residential programs, Pakseresht said.

All state licensed long-term care facilities are required to follow infection control protocols and maintain updated emergency plans that include how they will respond to a pandemic.

Assembling a team to conduct reviews to provide additional oversight of these requirements is part of a multi-department state effort to manage Oregon’s risk with the spread of COVID-19 in the U.S. The team’s focus will be adjusted as needed based on the most current information about Covid-19 cases and guidance received from the Oregon Health Authority.

The Office of Aging and People with Disabilities has been in regular contact with the operators of licensed long-term care facilities and has also reached out to individuals who are registered through the Oregon Home Care Commission to provide in-home care to reinforce the importance that they follow guidance on illness prevention.

“At this time, we are focused on prevention because we are fortunate to have no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in a state-licensed care facility in Oregon,” said Mike McCormick, interim director of the Office of Aging and People with Disabilities.

“But we also want to do everything we can now so that, in the event we have an incident of COVID-19, we are prepared to minimize its impact. We are deeply committed to our role of protecting the well-being of vulnerable Oregonians.”

Facts about the long-term care facility reviews:

- More than 70 licensing staff members with the Office of Aging and People with Disabilities will be focused on the statewide review process.
- Approximately 670 facilities will be visited.
- Facility types included in the review are nursing, assisted living and residential care, including those designated as memory care communities.
- Focus will include a review of each facility’s pandemic emergency preparedness and infection control practices.