



Nursing Home Response and Operation of “Bridge Teams” in Maryland

May 1, 2020

On April 29, Governor Larry Hogan issued an Executive Order authorizing MDH Secretary Robert R. Neall to take additional action to control and prevent the spread of COVID-19 in nursing home facilities in Maryland. Under the orders, nursing facilities are subject to several new requirements aimed at protecting residents and staff and improving communication with both MDH and the public.

To provide additional leadership and support to Maryland nursing homes, Gov. Hogan appointed Col. Eric Allely, State Surgeon of the Maryland National Guard, to serve as a Special Safety and Compliance Officer. Col. Allely will oversee efforts to ensure that nursing homes are complying with state law and all safety protocols, in addition to compliance and cooperation with state strike teams when necessary.

Col. Allely is leading a response team effort to implement universal testing of all residents and staff at all Maryland nursing homes, regardless of whether they are symptomatic. Col. Allely's team has initiated a general survey of all facilities to assess their needs, and training for additional personnel on testing and infection control procedures. Nursing homes will be prioritized based on an imminent outbreak or a current rising threat risk, and any staff who test positive will be immediately discharged into isolation.

As some Maryland nursing homes have experienced challenges as a result of staff being discharged into isolation after a positive COVID-19 test result, Gov. Hogan also announced the creation of “bridge teams.” For the duration of the COVID-19 crisis, bridge teams will be used to help ensure the safety and continuity of care for nursing home residents amid any COVID-19 - related staffing shortages. Facilities must also register with the Chesapeake Registry to help identify whether state-aided staffing is needed to ensure adequate coverage.

To improve communication with MDH, all facilities must provide daily COVID-19-specific data updates via the Chesapeake Regional Information System for Our Patients (CRISP) daily. Facilities must also provide notification to residents’ family and staff within 12 hours of an outbreak and must, at a minimum, provide weekly updates.

To improve communication and transparency with the public, MDH is reporting on the congregate living facilities in Maryland (i.e., nursing homes, assisted living facilities, state and local facilities, and group homes with 10 or more occupants) that have confirmed COVID-19 cases and deaths via coronavirus.maryland.gov.

These data are updated weekly on Wednesdays during the 10 a.m. hour and are based on facility reports to MDH. Facilities listed report at least one confirmed case of COVID-19 and may be removed from the list when it is determined by health officials that all cases have cleared.

For more information about COVID-19 in Maryland visit coronavirus.maryland.gov.