


To: Nursing Homes and Assisted Living Facilities

From: Sharon Williams Lewis DHA, RN-BC, CPM 
Senior Deputy Director,
Health Regulation and Licensing Administration

Re: COVID-19 Outbreaks

Date: April 10, 2020

Department of Health (DC Health), Health Regulation and Licensing Administration (HRLA), is aware that the District is currently experiencing the effects of COVID-19 outbreaks in nursing homes and assisted living facilities. Nursing homes and assisted living facilities must comply with all guidance set forth on infection prevention and control measures necessary to prevent COVID-19, including the current guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and DC Health. It is imperative that all long term care facilities in the District comply with this guidance to decrease the risk of transmission and limit the spread of COVID-19.

DC Health determined that some hospitals are experiencing tremendous strain because they have nowhere to place residents with and without a recent diagnosis of COVID-19 who are ready for discharge. This is caused by nursing homes and assisted living facilities refusing to accept readmissions from hospitals. For your residents admitted or seen at a hospital for COVID-19, the resident must be allowed to return to the facility as long as the facility can follow the CDC recommendations for transmission-based precautions (i.e., contact and droplet precautions with eye protection). Please note that usual procedures for transporting residents must be followed.

Furthermore, we have been made aware that many nursing homes and assisted living facilities are continuing to send specimens for suspect COVID-19 residents to commercial laboratories, where turnaround times can be as high as two weeks. While using a commercial lab is acceptable for testing residents or staff who are not approved for testing through DC Health (such asymptomatic individuals), it is highly recommended that all symptomatic residents and staff are tested through DC Health and the DC Public Health Laboratory (DC PHL). This is because the turnaround time through DC PHL is 24-48 hours. If you have a symptomatic resident or staff member, please call 202-576-1117 to initiate the approval process for testing through DC Health and the DC PHL. Staff members also have the option to get tested through their primary care provider.

It is crucial that you comply with the above directives to ensure that we protect our nursing homes and assisted living facilities from further COVID-19 outbreaks, prevent further strain on hospitals caring for COVID-19 patients, and ensure rapid identification of residents in nursing homes and assisted living facilities with COVID-19. HRLA expects that all facilities shall continue to monitor CDC guidance on infection and prevention control measures and should be alert for any additional direction and guidance on the matters addressed in this transmittal.