



To: Nursing Homes and Assisted Living Facilities

From: Patricia Tomsko Nay, MD, Executive Director, Office of Health Care Quality

*Patricia Tomsko Nay, MD*

Re: COVID-19 Outbreaks

Date: April 1, 2020

The Office of Health Care Quality is aware that Maryland is currently experiencing a proliferation 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 the Maryland Department of Health (MDH). These measures have been repeatedly reviewed in MDH's weekly webinars and are available in the written guidance document "Preparing for and Responding to COVID-19 in Long-term Care and Assisted Living Facilities." It is imperative that all long term care facilities in Maryland comply with this guidance to decrease the risk of transmission and limit the spread of COVID-19.

Additionally, it has come to our attention that many nursing homes and assisted living facilities are refusing to accept readmissions from hospitals. This practice is causing a tremendous strain on hospitals who have nowhere to place residents with and without a recent diagnosis of COVID-19 who are ready for discharge. 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).

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 turn-around times are less than ideal. All suspect COVID-19 cases from nursing homes and assisted living facilities must be sent to the MDH laboratory to ensure rapid identification of residents with COVID-19.

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.

OHCQ expects that all facilities shall continue to monitor CDC and MDH guidance on infection and prevention control measures and should be alert for any additional direction and guidance on the matters addressed in this transmittal.