Recommendations for Skilled Nursing and Long Term Care Facilities regarding COVID-19

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) poses a risk to senior patients at skilled nursing and long term care facilities (SNF/LTCF), as residents face worse health outcomes as a result of the disease due to advanced age and comorbidities. All SNF/LTCFs should conduct increased symptom screening among staff, healthcare personnel (HCP), and visitors to minimize the risk of COVID-19 within their facilities. The following recommendations should be implemented at SNF/LTCFs to protect those populations most at risk.

- **Create COVID-19 Preparedness Plan**
  - Establish clear structure and plan to manage and reduce risks pertaining to COVID-19. You may find more information and tools at: Preparing for COVID-19.
- **Minimize Chance for Exposures**
  - Ensure facility policies and practices are up-to-date to minimize exposures to respiratory pathogens including SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19.
  - Screen staff entering facilities for fever and respiratory symptoms. Reinforce sick leave policies. Remind HCP not to report to work when ill. Restrict non-essential staff and volunteers.
- **Adhere to Transmission Based Precautions**
  - Train staff on correct use, proper donning (putting on) and doffing (taking off), and disposal of any PPE. All HCP who enter the room of a patient with known or suspected COVID-19 (i.e., PUI) should adhere to Standard, Contact, and Airborne Precautions (Transmission Based Precautions). The patient should be placed in a negative pressure room, when available.
- **Manage Visitor Access and Movement within the Facility**
  - Restrict all visitation except for certain compassionate care situations such as end-of-life, and post signs that no visitors may enter the facility.
  - Educate families on visit restrictions and facilitate alternative methods such as video conferencing.
  - Monitor exempted visitors entering SNF/LTCFs and provide instruction on infection control practices.
- **Implement Engineering Controls and Barriers**
  - Consider designing and installing engineering controls (such as barriers, partitions, separate closed suction apparatuses, etc.) within facilities to reduce or eliminate exposures by shielding HCP and other patients from infected individuals.
- **Monitor and Manage Ill and Exposed Healthcare Personnel**
  - Movement and monitoring decisions for HCP with exposure to COVID-19 should be made in consultation with San Bernardino County Department of Public Health (SBCDPH). HCP who are ill should self-isolate at home and return to work based on CDC criteria (see SNF Toolkit).

- **Train and Educate Healthcare Personnel**
  - Provide HCP and facility staff with job or task-specific education and training on preventing transmission of infectious agents, including a refresher training.
- **Establish Reporting within Healthcare Facilities and to SBCDPH**
  - Implement mechanisms and policies that promptly alert key facility staff about known or suspected COVID-19 patients (i.e., PUI). Promptly notify SBCDPH of patients with known or suspected COVID-19 (i.e., PUI). Designate specific persons within the healthcare facility who are responsible for communication with public health officials at SBCDPH and dissemination of information to HCP.
  - To report a known or suspect case of COVID-19 to the SBCDPH, contact the SBCDPH Communicable Disease Section at 1-800-722-4794 from 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., Monday - Friday or after hours at 909-356-3805 (Duty Officer) and complete the COVID-19 Specimen Intake Form.