

Emergency Action Plan to Save Lives of Residents of California Long Term Care Facilities

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Stop COVID-19 from being introduced to skilled nursing facilities

Order facilities with no known or suspected COVID-19 outbreaks to refuse admission to any outside patients with infectious COVID-19. When COVID-19 enters nursing homes, it is highly likely to spread and kill residents despite precautions.

Designate facilities to provide care to COVID-19 patients after acute hospital discharge

Establish COVID-19 dedicated post-acute care facilities in counties and require all hospital post-discharge patients to be tested for COVID-19 and if positive, transferred to such facilities. Current skilled nursing facility residents should not be displaced to create COVID-19 dedicated facilities; rather, available empty spaces should be used.

Monitor facilities with residents who have COVID-19 on a daily basis

Assign a CDPH surveyor to conduct daily onsite monitoring visits at each facility with residents or staff who have COVID-19 and at facilities with poor compliance histories to ensure infection control practices and staffing levels are safe and to sound the alarm on the need for immediate intervention if they are not.

Deploy strike teams to intervene at facilities when residents are endangered

At the earliest sign of facility crisis related to COVID-19, send strike teams composed of state and local health departments, local health systems, the National Guard, ombudsman programs and CMS region 9 to provide emergency leadership, medical treatment, care, testing, supplies and equipment to save the lives of residents in overburdened facilities.

Ensure staffing is sufficient to keep residents safe

Require nursing facilities to maintain safe staffing levels and submit daily staffing reports to CDPH, county health departments, ombudsman programs, and CMS.

Employ emergency complaint system to help prevent outbreaks

Implement an emergency state complaint intake system for infection-related complaints with adequate surveyor resources to conduct immediate investigations.

Mandate transparency on infection levels

Require facilities to inform residents, families, staff members, state and local health departments and the local long-term care ombudsman when residents or staff test positive for COVID-19 and when residents or transferred residents die due to confirmed or suspected cases of COVID-19, along with the steps the facility is taking to treat infected residents and to protect other residents.

Inform the public on outbreaks at long term care facilities

Direct state and local health departments to identify long term care facilities that have residents or staff members with positive COVID-19 test results, to fully track and report deaths of residents at each facility or following transfers, and to publicly report and update the status of facility infections and deaths on a daily basis.

Require complete testing of all staff and residents

Implement contact tracing procedures when a positive result is discovered.

Ensure availability of personal protective equipment (PPE) at long term care facilities

Give long term care facilities high priority for distribution of PPE.

Prioritize prevention of infections

Require each nursing facility employ a qualified, full-time infection preventionist throughout the epidemic.

Visitation: Allow a Designated Visitor

While the State of California allows nursing home staff to go in and out without testing, without proper PPE and allows staff to work in multiple facilities, it has banned family, friends, clergy and long term care ombudsmen from visiting residents, leaving them to get sick and die alone. Isolation only adds to morbidity and mortality.

Enable residents to go home temporarily if they are able to do so

Give residents who wish to return home temporarily the means to do so by expediting assistance to provide home caregivers, making testing readily available, and giving residents the right to return to their nursing homes once the crisis recedes or if their stays at home become unsafe or unmanageable.

Offer workers "hazard pay" so they do not need to work in multiple long term care facilities simultaneously

To help address understaffing and prevent cross-transmission of the virus during the pandemic, require long term care facilities to pay doubletime to health care workers during the crisis, and to provide at least two weeks of paid sick leave.