Wolf Administration Issues Universal Testing Order for Nursing Homes, Updates Testing Guidance for Long-Term Care Facilities

Harrisburg, PA – The Wolf Administration today issued a universal testing order requiring all nursing homes to complete initial baseline testing no later than July 24. Additionally, the department issued updated testing guidance to all long-term care facilities (LTCFs) through the Health Alert Network (HAN).

"Our goal with implementing this universal testing in nursing homes is to rapidly detect asymptomatic positive residents, manage their care and prevent further transmission of COVID-19 in these living settings," Secretary of Health Dr. Levine said. "We are working tirelessly to include all long-term care facilities in this strategy as soon as possible. At this point, we are able to successfully expand testing and support to all staff and residents to further protect those in nursing homes across Pennsylvania."

Between May 11 and May 26 the department implemented a universal testing pilot project in five LTCFs across the commonwealth. The department is also working closely with additional facilities to implement universal testing by providing testing supplies, access to the Bureau of Laboratories and staffing support through the National Guard to train and assist with swabbing.

Thus far, over 75 LTCFs completed widespread testing, and the number of tests in LTCFs has increased 48 percent over the last two weeks, bringing the percent of positive cases in this population to its lowest level since the start of the outbreak.

Additionally, the department shared further information on the testing requirements and frequently asked questions on order.

The updated testing guidance the department issued to all long-term care facilities brings a renewed focus on:

- Keeping COVID-19 out of the facility by testing all staff and residents;
- Detecting cases quickly with facility-wide testing when a new case in a resident or health care professional is found; and
- Stopping the spread by continuing weekly testing of all residents and staff through at least 14 days since the most recent positive result.

For the purposes of the updated testing guidance, long term care facilities include, but is not limited to, skilled nursing facilities, personal care homes, assisted living residences, community residential rehabilitation services, long-term structured residence, residential treatment facility for adults and intermediate care facilities.

The Wolf Administration's [strategy to protect residents of LTCFs](#) focuses on ensuring resident safety through education, resources and testing; preventing and mitigating outbreaks; and working in partnership with other state agencies, municipal and county health departments and LTCFs.

As of June 5, the department has deployed [these mitigation efforts](#) to further stop the spread of COVID-19 and best protect residents and staff of LTCFs:

- Pushed out over 1,870 shipments of PPE to date, which has included 167,674 gowns, 131,700 face shields, 792,000 gloves, 2,632,280 N95s masks and 881,700 surgical masks.
- Deployed 55 Pennsylvania National Guard Strike Teams to 27 different LTCFs.
- Responded to 100 percent of outbreaks, defined as one or more confirmed positive case among- staff or residents, in LTCFs.
- Provided advice and consultation on infection control and outbreak response to facilities and, where needed.
- Collaborated, partnered and received report from local, state, and federal resources, along with contracted support from ECRI.

Through the collaborations and partnerships with ECRI and Patient Safety Authority (PSA), the department provided infection control and technical assistance to over 100 and 90 different LTCFs, respectively. The Educational Support and Clinical Consultation Program (ESCCP) team has provided clinical guidance, advice on infection control strategies, and clinical needs identification to over 250 facilities.

"Throughout this pandemic, we have worked tirelessly to provide the most up-to-date and accurate information," Secretary of Health Dr. Levine said. "It is essential that nursing homes are providing complete and accurate data to the department so we can collect that information and inform the public. We are committed to working with each facility to ensure they have the support needed to provide high quality care to their patients."

The [long term care facility data](#) mandated by the department includes the number of cases, number of employee cases and number of deaths that have occurred at each facility. Facilities who are not reporting, or not reporting properly, have been assisted to ensure the data is being shared properly. As testing becomes more widespread, it is important that all facilities report all necessary information.

For facilities with less than five in any of the collected data points, the information is redacted to protect patient confidentiality at that facility. If a facility does not have any COVID-19 cases or deaths, it will still be shown on the spreadsheet.

More information on data reporting requirements for nursing home facilities can be found [here](#).

The Wolf Administration stresses the role Pennsylvanians play in helping to reduce the spread of COVID-19:

- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Cover any coughs or sneezes with your elbow, not your hands.
- Clean surfaces frequently.
- Stay home to avoid spreading COVID-19, especially if you are unwell.
- If you must go out for a life-sustaining reason, please wear a mask.

Updated Coronavirus Links: Press Releases, State Lab Photos, Graphics

- [Daily COVID-19 Report](#)
- [Press releases regarding coronavirus](#)
- [Latest information on the coronavirus](#)
- [Photos of the state's lab in Exton](#) (for download and use)
- [Coronavirus and preparedness graphics](#) (located at the bottom of the page)
- [Community preparedness and procedures materials](#)
- [Map with the number of COVID-19 cases](#)

All Pennsylvania residents are encouraged to sign up for AlertPA, a text notification system for health, weather, and other important alerts like COVID-19 updates from commonwealth agencies. Residents can sign up online at [www.ready.pa.gov/BeInformed/Signup-For-Alerts.](#)