

Governor Phil Murphy

Health Commissioner Orders COVID-19 Testing in all Long-Term Care Facilities

05/12/2020

To limit exposure and reduce the spread of COVID-19, Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli today signed an Executive Directive (https://www.state.nj.us/health/legal/covid19/05-12-2020_LTC_COVID19testing.pdf) requiring all long-term care facilities in the state to implement testing of staff and residents for the virus by May 26.

In addition, the Executive Directive provides for retesting of individuals who test negative within 3-7 days to detect those with newly developed infection, and further retesting in accordance with CDC guidance.

Long-term care facilities also have to amend their outbreak plans to include plans for testing and retesting staff and residents, cohorting of residents who test positive, policies for excluding staff who test positive as well and timeframes and requirements for returning to work in accordance with CDC and Department of Health recommendations.

Testing of vulnerable residents in long-term care facilities is essential to control the spread of COVID-19 and to identify asymptomatic but positive residents so they can be cohorted based on test results. Testing health care providers and support staff in all long-term facilities is critical because they may be unknowingly contributing to the spread of COVID-19.

“We want to collaborate with long-term care facilities to protect their residents and staff. We all have a role to play in this,” **said Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli.**

Test results would be used to strengthen infection control and prevention strategies. If staff test positive for COVID-19 (symptomatic or asymptomatic), they may return to work (https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/documents/topics/NCOV/Guidance_for_COVID19_Diagnosed_andor_Exposed_HCP.pdf) in line with CDC and Department of Health recommendations.

There are 90,000 residents in nursing homes and Assisted Living facilities. Nearly 26,000 positive cases have been reported from these facilities.

The Executive Directive applies to licensed nursing homes, Assisted Living facilities, dementia care homes, residential health care facilities and comprehensive personal care homes.

Last month, the state completed a pilot project testing 4,600 residents and staff in 16 South Jersey long-term care facilities. A majority of those who tested positive were asymptomatic. This led the state to develop a statewide testing plan in three additional phases in coordination with hospitals throughout the state. The second phase, which includes 76 additional facilities with 10,324 beds, is ongoing.

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