



County of San Diego

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WILMA J. WOOTEN, M.D., M.P.H.
PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICER

March 13, 2020

TO: Long Term Care Facilities
Senior Care Facilities
Residential Facilities

FROM: Wilma J. Wooten, M.D., M.P.H.,
Public Health Officer & Director,
Public Health Services

RE: COVID-19 PLANNING AND RESPONSE EFFORTS

I am sending you this communication on behalf of the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency (HHS) Public Health Services (PHS) department (local health department). The novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) global outbreak is rapidly changing day-to-day.

It is important to know that while the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) considers that this is a serious public health threat, currently, the risk for the general American public remains low. That could, however, change at any time as the situation remains fluid. Globally, as of March 13, 2020, at 4:18 PM, there have been over 140,875 [cases and 5,359 deaths](#) associated with COVID-19. Nationwide, there have been [1,629 confirmed cases in the United States](#) (U.S.), including [247 in California](#), with numbers changing by the hour. It is important for you and your organization(s) to continue to follow updates on the local, state, national, and global situations, as the virus inevitably will continue to spread for some time.

My last update provided an overview of County preparedness efforts. Since then, community-acquired infections have occurred in various U.S. locations. Even though we only have one presumptive positive, travel-related case in San Diego county, in the last week the disease has spread to over 130 countries and as yesterday has been declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization. Therefore, we must be prepared to respond accordingly.

This letter provides guidance to you, your leadership, and your facility to prepare for a COVID-19 outbreak or pandemic. Ill visitors and health care personnel (HCP) are the most likely sources of introduction of COVID-19 into a facility. CDC recommends aggressive visitor restrictions and enforcing sick leave policies for ill HCP, even before COVID-19 is identified in a community or facility. In addition, the County encourages your facility to:

- Sign up to get County News Center stories emailed directly to you [here](#) and encourage your staff to do the same;

- Review and disseminate the County of San Diego [Fact Sheets](#) to your staff;
- Develop and implement strategies to protect your workforce from COVID-19, while ensuring continuity of operations. (CDC recommends that during a COVID-19 outbreak, all sick employees should stay home and away from the workplace, respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene should be encouraged, and routine cleaning of commonly touched surfaces should be performed regularly);
- Review your facility's Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP);
- Develop or update policies and procedures regarding sick leave;
- Develop or update policies and procedures regarding telecommuting (i.e., working from home);
- Develop or update policies and procedures regarding other social distancing strategies, such as videoconferencing for meetings and canceling large events;
- Develop or update pandemic planning documents;
- Develop or update any other guidance documents specific to your facility to contain the spread of COVID-19; and
- Ensure review of all the above documents by your leadership, staff and contractors.

As a facility that serves vulnerable populations, the County is asking you to share the following information with your leadership, employees, volunteers, and families, as well as begin planning efforts for your facility. Included in this communication are links to some key interim guidance, which is based on what is currently known. As additional guidance is developed, this information will be posted on our [County website](#).

- [Strategies to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19 in Long-Term Care Facilities \(LTCF\), March 10, 2020](#)
- [Interim Guidance for Public Health Professionals Managing People With COVID-19 in Home Care and Isolation Who Have Pets or Other Animals, March 4, 2020](#)
- [Evaluating and Reporting Persons Under Investigation \(PUI\), March 4, 2020](#)
- [Active Monitoring of Persons Exposed to Patients with Confirmed COVID-19 — United States, January–February 2020, March 3, 2020](#)
- [Preventing COVID-19 Spread in Communities, March 2, 2020](#)
- [CDC Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\), February 2020](#)
- [Resources for Healthcare Facilities, February 29, 2020](#)
- [Interim Guidance for Healthcare Facilities, February 29, 2020](#)
- [Steps Healthcare Facilities Can Take, February 29, 2020](#)
- [Interim Guidance for Public Health Personnel Evaluating Persons Under Investigation \(PUIs\) and Asymptomatic Close Contacts of Confirmed Cases at Their Home or Non-Home Residential Settings, February 24, 2020](#)
- [Healthcare Infection Prevention and Control FAQs for COVID-19, February 18, 2020](#)
- [CDPH Guidance for Mass Gatherings and Large Community Events, March 7, 2020](#)

Please review the CDC website for additional guidance that may be of interest to you and your organization. This guidance is based on what is currently known. As further guidance is developed, this info will be posted on our and/or the CDC webpages.

The County of San Diego has an established preparedness and response system in place. This process brings together surveillance, criteria to guide evaluation of a patient under investigation, epidemiological investigation, public health laboratory testing, education and outreach, and levels of response. To date, the County has taken numerous actions in accordance with the [*Consumer Version of the COVID-19 Response Plan*](#).

I want you to know that we are all in this together with one singular mission, to protect the public and prevent the spread of this virus. I want to emphasize that your decisive leadership, action, and support are essential, and your partnership is greatly appreciated. If your employees or residents have questions or concerns related to COVID-19, please encourage them to call 2-1-1 for general information.

For additional information about the outbreak and associated resources, please go to the coronavirus websites at [CDC](#) and the [County of San Diego](#). There you will find the latest CDC guidance and local information, respectively. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at MOC.PHO.HHSA@sdcounty.ca.gov.

Thank you for your continued partnership and support to keep the residents of San Diego County healthy, safe, and thriving.

Sincerely,


WILMA J. WOOTEN, M.D., M.P.H.
Public Health Officer & Director
Public Health Services

cc: Helen Robbins-Meyer, County of San Diego, Chief Administrative Officer
Nick Macchione, County of San Diego, Health and Human Services Agency, Director