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May 13, 2020

Dear Skilled Nursing Facility Administrator, Director of Nursing or Infection Preventionist:

This is to provide you with an update on the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (Public Health) plan for COVID-19 prevention and control in skilled-nursing facilities (SNFs). As of May 1, 2020, there have been over 200 SNFs with at least one patient or staff member with COVID-19. Until now, controlling and understanding the extent of COVID-19 facility outbreaks has been constrained by limited laboratory capacity for diagnostic testing. The County, however, has recently established a relationship with a laboratory to support more COVID-19 testing at SNFs.

In light of the increased COVID-19 diagnostic testing capacity and recognition of the occurrence of asymptomatic infection, Public Health will implement the following 2-pronged strategy:

- For SNFs with at least one confirmed COVID-19 case, comprehensive testing of all residents and staff to better assess and inform outbreak management for the facility, and
- For SNFs without known COVID-19 cases, surveillance testing of a sample of residents to identify cases and possible outbreaks early.

Given the large number of SNFs currently affected by COVID-19 outbreaks and the severe health outcomes being reported from them, Public Health will continue reaching out to all outbreak-affected facilities over the coming weeks to schedule comprehensive testing. The initial testing of all COVID-19-affected facilities will be conducted by Public Health at no cost to facilities. Testing for facilities located within Los Angeles City will be coordinated through the independently run City Testing Program. Additional testing for future outbreaks and active surveillance should be done through a commercial laboratory. Therefore, all SNFs should immediately establish a relationship with a laboratory capable of COVID-19 diagnostic testing to implement the following measures by May 25, 2020:

- Given the potential for severe health outcomes from a COVID-19 outbreak within skilled nursing facility, facilities without any laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 patients will be required to test a random sample of 10% of all facility residents weekly (or a minimum of 10 residents in facilities with <100 residents) to facilitate early identification and management of a potential outbreak. In addition, all newly admitted patients and patients developing symptoms compatible with COVID-19 should be tested and placed in isolation precautions pending a negative test result.
- Facilities will be required to immediately report any persons who test positive and to report the aggregate number of residents tested to Public Health weekly.
- If any facility resident is identified as having a positive test, Public Health will require comprehensive testing of all residents and staff.

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Please refer to [Public Health guidance on mass testing in long-term care facilities](#) for information on isolation/cohorting of residents and staff who test positive. All facilities with an identified COVID-19 case will be assigned a public health nurse to assist with outbreak management. In addition, we sent to you, by email, a brief survey on your Facility's access to COVID-19 diagnostic testing. Your responses to the survey will inform Public Health on the resources necessary to support your Facility in establishing active surveillance.

We acknowledge that the current COVID-19 response has placed tremendous burdens on your staff and resources and appreciate all that you and your staff are doing to prevent and limit the spread of COVID-19 within your facility. We hope that the proactive steps put forth in this letter will improve the protection of your patients and staff through earlier detection and containment of facility outbreaks of COVID-19.

If you have any questions, please let us know.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Muntu Davis, M.D., M.P.H.", is positioned above the typed name.

Muntu Davis, M.D., M.P.H.  
County Health Officer

