The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (Public Health) is asking for your assistance to prepare for and help prevent the spread of the novel (new) coronavirus in Los Angeles County. Globally, there continues to be a growing number of people infected with this virus, which causes “coronavirus disease 2019” (abbreviated COVID-19) in mainland China and elsewhere. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organization, current global trends indicate that the virus may spread worldwide causing a pandemic. We need to prepare to prevent the spread of this infection locally.

While the immediate health risk of COVID-19 to the general public in Los Angeles is still considered low, Public Health is proactively taking steps to prevent the spread of this infection. We strongly recommend that all organizations review and update their emergency plans and consider ways to continue essential services if on-site operations must be reduced temporarily. We are particularly concerned about how a case of COVID-19 in a congregate setting such as yours might lead to the rapid spread of disease. We would like to provide you with some general information about COVID-19, as well as specific actions you should take to help prevent the spread of respiratory infections, including COVID-19 at your setting.

We encourage you to visit the DPH Novel Coronavirus webpage for resources including Guidance for Business and Employers, Frequently Asked Questions, and infographics: http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/Coronavirus/.

**General Information**

**What is novel coronavirus?**
Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses. Many of them infect animals, but some coronaviruses from animals can evolve (change) and infect humans, then spread from person-to-person. This is what happened with the current novel coronavirus. Diseases from coronaviruses in people typically cause mild to moderate illness, like the common cold. Some, like the SARS or MERS viruses, cause serious infections like pneumonia.

**What are common symptoms of COVID-19?**
Information to date shows this new virus causes symptoms consistent with a respiratory illness, such as cough, fever, and, in some, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing.

**How are coronaviruses spread?**
Like other respiratory illnesses, such as influenza, human coronaviruses most commonly spread to others from an infected person who has symptoms through:
- Droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes.
- Close personal contact, such as caring for an infected person.
- Touching an object or surface with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes before washing your hands.

COVID-19 is new, and we continue learning more each day about how it spreads and how long it takes for people to become sick. As information changes, we will keep you informed.

Do not assume that someone is at risk for novel coronavirus infection based on their race/ethnicity or country of origin.
What preventive measures should be taken at an organizational level to reduce the spread of respiratory viruses, like the virus that causes COVID-19?

- Educate and emphasize the importance of the everyday personal prevention actions (see below).
- Encourage and support your staff and volunteers to stay home when they are sick. Remind them to stay home and not return to work until they are free of fever for at least 24 hours without fever-reducing medication.
- Provide adequate supplies for good hygiene, including easy access to clean and functional handwashing stations, soap, paper towels, and alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Minimize, where possible, close contact and the sharing of objects such as cups, food, and drink.
- Routinely clean and disinfect all frequently touched surfaces and objects, such as doorknobs, bannisters, countertops, faucet handles, and phones. Use the usual cleaning agents and follow the label directions.
- Provide members of the congregate living facility and employees with accurate information about novel coronavirus and steps they can take to protect themselves and their families.

Everyday personal prevention actions include:

- Stay home when you are sick. Stay home for at least 24 hours after you no longer have a fever or symptoms of a fever without the use of fever-reducing medicines.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue, and then dispose of the tissue and clean your hands immediately. If you do not have a tissue, use your sleeve (not your hands).
- Limit close contact with people who are sick.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipes.

What steps should our facility take now to reduce the spread of respiratory illnesses?

- Have a plan to communicate information with your staff and volunteers. Visit our website, publichealth.lacounty.gov, for accurate and updated information that can be used for your communications. Identify and address potential language, cultural, and disability barriers associated with communicating COVID-19 information to workers and those you serve.
- Ensure capacity to isolate residents who are positive with COVID-19, and quarantine residents who are close contacts of a confirmed case.
- Plan for worker absences. Do not require a healthcare provider’s note for employees or volunteers who are sick with acute respiratory illness to validate their illness or to return to work. Healthcare provider offices and medical facilities will be extremely busy and not able to provide such documentation in a timely way.
- Plan for ways to continue essential services if on-site operations are reduced temporarily.
- Post signs at the facility entrance instructing visitors not to enter if they have fever, cough or shortness of breath.
- Describe what actions the facility is taking to protect residents, answer questions and explain what they can do to protect themselves and their fellow residents.
- Assess all patients daily and upon admission for symptoms of fever, cough and shortness of breath.
- Assess all residents daily and upon entry for symptoms of fever, cough and shortness of breath. Any residents with fever or respiratory symptoms (i.e., cough and/or shortness of breath) should be confined to their room.
Los Angeles County Department of Public Health

Guidance for Managing COVID-19 in Long-Term Care Facilities (i.e., Skilled Nursing Facilities)

- For undiagnosed fever or respiratory symptoms, healthcare workers should place the resident on standard, contact, and droplet precautions with eye protection.
- If residents must leave the room (for example, medically necessary procedures) have them wear a facemask (if tolerated).
- Because visitors can introduce COVID-19 into the facility, consider stopping visitors from entering the facility while COVID-19 is circulating. Set-up alternative methods of visitation such as through videoconferencing.
- Monitor staff for fever or respiratory symptoms each day before they start work
  - Staff with fever and respiratory symptoms should be sent home until they are fever free for at least 24 hours without use of fever reducing medication.
  - Staff with mild respiratory symptoms (runny nose, cough), but no fever should don a surgical mask when interacting with patients.
- Practice good infection control
  - Follow recommended PPE guidance from CDC.
  - Hand hygiene stations should be readily available in care areas.
  - Support hand and respiratory hygiene, as well as cough etiquette by residents, visitors, and employees.
  - Ensure employees clean their hands according to CDC guidelines, including before and after contact with residents, after contact with contaminated surfaces or equipment, and after removing personal protective equipment (PPE).
  - Put alcohol-based hand rub in every resident room (ideally both inside and outside of the room).
  - Make sure tissues are available and any sink is well-stocked with soap and paper towels for hand washing.
  - Provide the right supplies to ensure easy and correct use of PPE.
    - Post signs on the door or wall outside of the resident room that clearly describe the type of precautions needed and required PPE.
    - Make PPE, including facemasks, eye protection, gowns, and gloves, available immediately outside of the resident room.
    - Position a trash can near the exit inside any resident room to make it easy for employees to discard PPE.
  - Environmental cleaning should be done with EPA-approved healthcare disinfectant consistent with recommended wet contact time. Reference: California Department of Public Health AFL for Environmental Infection Control for the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) (02/19/20)

Caring for a Confirmed or Possible COVID-19 Patient

- Because testing for COVID-19 is currently limited, only patients that are ill enough for hospitalization will be tested.
- If you plan to transfer the patient to a higher level of care due to worsening respiratory status, notify EMS and the receiving facility that the patient has an undiagnosed respiratory infection.
- If multiple patients in your facility become newly sick with fever and respiratory symptoms, notify the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health at 213-240-7941 during daytime hours or (213) 974-1234 (After Hours Emergency Operator)
Know where to get reliable information
Beware of scams, false news and hoaxes surrounding novel coronavirus. Accurate information, including announcements of new cases in LA County, will always be distributed by Public Health through press releases, social media, and our website. The website has more information on COVID-19 including FAQs, infographics and a guide to coping with stress, as well as tips on handwashing.

- Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (LACDPH, County)
  - http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/Coronavirus/
  - Social media: @lapublichealth
- The Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health Access Center 24/7 Helpline (800) 854-7771.

Other reliable sources of information about novel coronavirus are:
- LAC DPH coronavirus website http://www.ph.lacounty.gov/media/Coronavirus/
- LAC DPH coronavirus webpage for Health Professionals Includes travel alert posters and provider checklist http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/acd/nCorona2019.htm
- Los Angeles Health Alert Network: The Department of Public Health (DPH) emails priority communications to health care professionals through LAHAN. Topics include local or national disease outbreaks and emerging health risks. http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/lahan/
- California Department of Public Health: https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/nCOV2019.aspx