



HEALTH OFFICER NOTICE



From the Desk of Dr. Gregory Wm. Branch

RE: COVID-19 Testing of Congregate Care Residents and Staff

May 4, 2020

This Health Officer's Notice provides guidance to congregate care facilities relating to testing of staff and residents in concurrence with the recent Executive Order established by Governor Larry Hogan:

<https://governor.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Nursing-Homes-Amended-4.29.20.pdf>.

Please ensure that the following protocols are in place as you prepare your facility for testing:

- **Pre-Testing Protocols:** The facility should have a plan in place **PRIOR** to the beginning of testing for COVID 19. The plan must incorporate the following:
 - Formalizing agreement with staffing agencies to back-fill for positive staff who are unable to work. The agency staff also must be tested prior to working at the facility.
 - Securing test kits to accommodate testing of staff and residents (except for persons who have already tested positive for COVID-19).
 - Securing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for staff and residents.
 - Planning how to cohort positive and negative residents.
 - Determining re-testing schedule for those who initially test negative.
- **Continuation of Infection Control and Prevention Measures:** In addition to the testing protocols, facilities must continue to enforce infection control and prevention measures as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
 - Restricting visitors.
 - Ceasing communal dining and all group activities.
 - Monitoring for symptoms in both healthcare providers and residents.
 - Universal masking and use of PPE.
 - Reporting an outbreak (defined as one case in a staff member or a resident) to Baltimore County Department of Health at 410-887-6011.
 - Cohorting residents that test positive and negative and assigning specific staff for their care.
 - Identifying staff who test positive and initiate work exclusions.

Careful adherence will inform prevention and containment of the COVID-19 virus amongst the extremely vulnerable populations associated with congregate care.

If there are any questions, call the Baltimore County COVID-19 Hotline, 410-887-3816.