**STATEMENT & TALKING POINTS FOR FACILITIES WITH CORONAVIRUS**

**Infection Prevention and Control in Home Health Care**

**Updated: April 14, 2020**

**[TAILOR FOR YOUR USE]**

**Press statement:**

“We are doing everything we can to ensure we stop the spread of this within our community. We currently have **[NUMBER]** confirmed positive COVID-19 cases associated with the patients/staff in our community, and we are in very close communication with local and state health officials to ensure we are taking the appropriate steps at this time. Our staff and patients are following the recommended preventative actions within our community until the virus has been eradicated.”

**talking points:**

* Due to patient privacy laws, we are unable to share any further specific information about the confirmed case(s) in our patient community, but we have notified their immediate family members/guardian and the department of public health.
* Patient safety is a top priority for **[FACILITY NAME]**. This virus is especially dangerous to our population—older adults with underlying health conditions—so, this is a critical issue that requires our immediate attention.
* **[FACILITY NAME]** is in close contact with our local and state health departments, as well as the CDC, to stay up to date on the information to prevent and manage the spread of Coronavirus.
* Home Health are working with local, state and federal resources to help prevent the spread of this virus.
* We have reviewed and updated our infection prevention and control plans and our emergency communication plan.
  + We are following general public health best practices: handwashing, using alcohol-based hand sanitizers and covering coughs.
* We have reinforced to our staff that anyone who is sick should stay home, and we are screening all essential personnel as they report to work each day.
* We will continue to keep family members up to date as this situation unfolds, so they have the latest information about their loved ones.

**COMMON MEDIA QUESTIONS:**

*How concerned are you for home health patients?*

* We know that the frail and elderly are especially susceptible to this virus. That’s why we are in close communication with our local health department, CDC and CMS to ensure we have the latest information and resources available.

*Are you having trouble getting things like masks and gowns?*

* We have heard that some home care providers are having some of the same difficulties as other health care providers getting masks and gowns. In our facility, we **[PROVIDE INFO ON YOUR SUPPLIES (e.g., conservation efforts)]**.
* [**CUSTOMIZE BASED ON YOUR SITUATION**: We [have reached/are reaching] out to our county emergency management coordinators when we are unable to place orders for equipment we need.]
* It’s important to remind the public that the CDC does not recommend surgical masks for the general public—cloth face coverings are acceptable—so we can prioritize masks for health care workers. We also urge members of the public to not hoard items like hand sanitizer, so we can make that available to residents and staff, who need to use it regularly.

*If staff have to stay home because they are sick/schools close, how are you ensuring that there are enough staff to care for your residents?*

* Our state and national associations are encouraging both federal and state governments to waive current licensing requirements that would hinder care professionals from working across state lines, so we can potentially address any shortages due to employees needing to stay home.
* Our state and national associations are also advocating for priority testing for our employees and residents, so we can quickly identify whether staff need to remain at home or if they can come back to work.
* **[PROVIDE STEPS FACILITY IS TAKING]**

**BACKGROUND:**

* To decrease the risk of viral outbreaks in patient homes, two processes need to be in place.
  + First, efforts should focus on how to decrease the introduction of viruses into a patient’s home environment.
  + Second, steps to decrease the spread of a virus between patients need to be in place and followed consistently.
  + Even then, outbreaks may still occur. Agencies should have a process to limit the spread of a virus and also treat individuals with an infection to decrease the risk of illness exacerbation, hospitalization, and in severe cases, death.
* Steps to help prevent the introduction of a virus into a patients home include:
  + Keeping all ill individuals from visiting the patient, including family, and employees.
  + Encouraging frequent hand hygiene.
  + Immunization of health care workers (e.g. influenza, measles, diphtheria, pertussis, chicken pox) or limiting health care workers physical interaction with residents when not immunized or using masks when such viral infections are found at increased levels in the community, (follow agency policy)
* Steps to help decrease the risk of viral spread within a community include:
  + Ongoing hand hygiene at high levels. This can be achieved with: Readily available alcohol-based hand sanitizers.
  + Regular and frequent internal monitoring systems of hand hygiene with regular feedback to staff.
  + Visual reminders that hand hygiene helps patient stay healthy.
  + Early identification of viral infections that cause upper respiratory illness (e.g. “colds”, “flu”, or “winter crud”) that lead to steps that prevent viral spread. Preventative measures include: Early contact isolation and droplet protection for individuals with flu-like symptoms before a definitive diagnosis is made. This includes: Keeping ill individuals away from healthy individuals.
  + Use of masks on residents with symptoms
  + Use of personal protective equipment by staff and visitors for droplet protection.
  + Use of appropriate cleaning products on surfaces that are cytotoxic for common viral infections and changing these cleaning products when the harder to kill infectious agents are identified and requires special cleaning products, such as C. diff, norovirus and adenovirus.