



Public Health Division

County of Santa Cruz

HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY

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Press Release

For Release: Immediately

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Date: April 23, 2020

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COUNTY COMPLETES COVID-19 READINESS ASSESSMENT OF SKILLED NURSING FACILITIES

Santa Cruz County, CA - The County of Santa Cruz Public Health Division has completed assessments of local skilled nursing facilities and continues working closely with them to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Through site visits, needs assessments and guidance, Public Health staff have supported skilled nursing facility operations and is prepared to direct additional public health resources to local facilities should an outbreak occur. While there are currently no known cases among skilled nursing facility residents within Santa Cruz County, the presence of medically-vulnerable individuals living in close quarters have made skilled nursing and long-term care facilities highly susceptible to outbreaks of COVID-19.

On March 20, Health Officer Dr. Gail Newel issued a no-visitation order at residential health care facilities throughout Santa Cruz County. The order has since been extended indefinitely and covers all visitation other than end-of-life situations.

In early April, Public Health developed a seven-member team of Communicable Disease Unit staff to coordinated and complete on-site assessments of each of the seven skilled nursing facilities within Santa Cruz County. This team worked with skilled-nursing staff on reviewing the facility's capacity for isolation and quarantine of residents, reviewing their process for managing staff and/or residents with COVID-19, and ensuring each facility had policies in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

“The success of our local COVID-19 response is dependent on the readiness of our healthcare facilities,” says Michelle Meszaros, the lead Public Health Nurse for the skilled nursing facility assessments.



The Centers for Disease Control has urged all long-term care facilities to act now to prevent the spread of COVID-19, including taking measures to address asymptomatic and pre-symptomatic transmission such as screening essential personnel prior to entering the facility.

All skilled nursing facilities have COVID-19 prevention protocols in place, including the use of face coverings by staff and residents in common areas, routine screening of staff and residents for fever and respiratory illness, increased environmental cleaning, and adhering to physical distancing guidelines.

“We are heartened by the proactive engagement of our skilled nursing facilities, and look forward to ongoing collaboration,” Meszaros said. “We are in this together.”

State and federal guidance on safe operations for skilled nursing facilities is available at https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CHCQ/HAI/CDPH%20Document%20Library/COVID.19_GuidanceFor_SNF_HAI%20WebinarFINAL_03.13.20.pdf and <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/long-term-care.html>.

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