



NEWS RELEASE

COVID-19 Response

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April 6, 2020

County creates Nursing Facilities Task Force; issues order mandating patient safety measures



The County Department of Public Health has established a multiagency Nursing Facilities Task Force aimed at mitigating the spread of COVID-19 among the county's most vulnerable residents, and the Acting County Health Officer has issued an order requiring nursing facilities to take multiple steps to protect their elderly and health-compromised clients.

There are 171 state-licensed nursing facilities in San Bernardino County caring for at least 6,600 of the county's most at-risk residents. Gov. Gavin Newsom on Saturday identified San Bernardino County as one of four nursing home "hotspots" in the state.

"The County is dedicating every resource we can to fighting the spread of COVID-19," said Board of Supervisors Chairman Curt Hagman. "This task force will focus on supporting our senior living facilities in their efforts to preserve the safety of their residents."

Work on forming the task force began early last week after a COVID-19 outbreak occurred at Cedar Mountain Post-Acute Rehabilitation in Yucaipa. Seventy-five residents and staff at the facility have tested positive and five residents have died of causes related to COVID-19. Later in the week, an outbreak was detected at the Reche Canyon Rehabilitation & Health Care Center in Colton, with eight residents and seven staff testing positive and one resident succumbing to the disease to date.

"The County of San Bernardino is moving quickly to get a handle on the spread of COVID-19 in nursing homes. This task force will be an integral component of the County's ability to protect our vulnerable senior population," said Third District Supervisor Dawn Rowe. Both the Yucaipa and Colton facilities are located in her district.

The County Nursing Facilities Task Force includes County Public Health and other County agencies, the California Department of Public Health, the Centers for Disease Control, Inland Empire Health Plan, and other emergency management and hospital stakeholders.

"The task force will proactively identify, map, and assess readiness for COVID-19 at nursing facilities throughout the county with the intent of identifying strategic sites that may act as COVID-19-positive sites to further mitigate spread among our most-vulnerable residents," said County Public Health Director Trudy Raymundo.

Also, Acting County Public Health Officer Dr. Erin Gustafson today issued an order requiring nursing facilities to employ any means necessary to cease the use of staff members who also work at other nursing facilities. The order also requires nursing home staff to wear protective gear to prevent them from spreading

illness to residents, requires staff members to monitor their temperatures, and forbids them from entering facilities if they have symptoms of any contagious illness. The order can be viewed by clicking [here](#).

“Without appropriate precautions and procedures, nursing homes can create a tragically ideal environment for the spread of viruses among those who are most susceptible to symptoms and complications,” Gustafson said.

As an immediate response to the Reche Canyon outbreak, County Public Health launched an aggressive testing campaign at the Colton facility and secured assistance from the State Department of Public Health, which regulates nursing facilities. The Yucaipa and Colton facilities are not affiliated.

This week, County Public Health will provide testing supplies and staff assistance to other facilities in the county affiliated with Cedar Mountain to aid in the testing of symptomatic residents and staff. The County is also assisting the City of Yucaipa in its plans to conduct a community testing event in the city this week.

San Bernardino County has 373 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and the deaths of 13 county residents ranging in age from 42 to 95 have been associated with the disease.

Various appropriate County departments and agencies have been working together since Jan. 25 to protect the community from the COVID-19 pandemic.

For information about the coronavirus crisis, visit the County’s coronavirus website at sbcovid19.com. New information and resources are updated daily. The public can also contact the COVID-19 hotline from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday at (909) 387-3911, or email the County at coronavirus@dph.sbcounty.gov.