

CMH Long-Term Care Facility COVID-19 Updates: Ash Grove Healthcare Facility

In an effort to keep everyone as updated as possible, Citizens Memorial Health Care Foundation facilities will utilize the facility website and facility Facebook page for COVID-19 updates and changes. For latest data regarding active cases and types of available visits - access the COVID-LTC dashboard: <https://www.citizensmemorial.com/covid-19/long-term-care-dashboard.html>

As the pandemic continues, we are learning better ways to keep residents, staff and visitors safe. The facility utilizes multiple resources for the best practices and guidance to include Center for Disease Control (CDC), Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS), Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), Infection Preventionists, as well as local, Federal and State health departments.

We implemented our infection prevention and control policies and procedures before the national mandate in March 2020, as we felt this was key to preventing coronavirus and other common viruses and continually update as new guidelines emerge.

CMH facilities have implemented required surveillance testing of employees in long-term care based on CMS guidelines. This surveillance testing is not due to positive cases at our facility, but to CMS requirements. If the facility has a positive employee or resident, we will move to outbreak testing which will supersede the scheduled surveillance testing. Outbreak testing will include residents as well as staff, using one of two testing parameters set by CMS. If a staff member or resident test positive for COVID-19 and close contacts can be identified testing of those individuals will be completed. If the positive staff member or resident and close contacts cannot be identified all residents and staff will be tested one to two times per week until everyone tested is negative.

Our goal is to ensure staff and residents are practicing proper infection prevention protocols and processes, including hand hygiene, proper cough and sneeze etiquette, as well as appropriate PPE. We have trained Infection Prevention nurses in all of CMH long term care facilities overseeing related protocols and processes.

We are following direction from the federal/state government, which requires employees who are sick must stay home. We are in very close communication with local and state health officials to ensure we are taking the appropriate steps. CMH LTC facilities implemented testing and screening in March 2020 and have updated this over time which includes pre-shift screenings of staff to assure early detection of potential issues. Residents are also screened routinely, including a COVID-19 assessment, to monitor for signs and symptoms of potential issues. As a part of this screening process, residents are encouraged to wear a face mask or face shield provided by the facility. They may choose to accept or decline.

We are following the updated infection prevention procedures like those used during flu season: including handwashing, use alcohol-based hand sanitizers, covering coughs and disinfecting the environment, as well as appropriate PPE. When COVID-19 status allows vendors or visitors to enter the facility, any items brought into the facility are sanitized as appropriate.

Resident safety is a top priority for all CMH LTC facilities. Every resident should have a clean, safe living environment. We agree that the spread of this novel virus is a critical issue that requires our full attention. Our goal is to try and keep the virus out and if it is found in the facility, to minimize the spread to anyone else. Additional training and communication to our staff has been completed and housekeeping/cleaning processes have been reviewed and if necessary updated to meet current guidelines.

Employees are required to wear appropriate PPE regarding status of COVID-19 in the facility or community, a mask is the minimal requirement PPE for staff. We also rely on local, state and federal resources to help prevent the spread of this virus, and we appreciate everything they're doing at this time. We have reviewed and updated infection prevention and control plans, as well as the emergency communication plan.

CMH Healthcare Command Center (HCC) team meets on a frequent basis providing updates and communications from a variety of health care professionals and specialists throughout the CMH organization. Being a part of a larger health care system has allowed us to be able to have these resources available.

CMH Foundation long-term care facilities are allowing two visitors by appointment for outdoor, indoor and as appropriate compassionate visits. Indoor visitation is determined by community spread data from CDC. Setting an appointment for a visit allows the facility to determine availability of times and staffing to provide screening and supervision, as required. Please read the visitation rules <https://bit.ly/3ezaxNC> for visit expectations including masking and social distancing. We want to continue keeping everyone safe; visits are subject to cancellation during severe weather including heat advisories. Thank you in advance for being kind to our screening staff that help coordinate the visits. We can't wait to see you. Call 417-751-2575 to schedule a visit with your resident.

Visits are subject to restrictions in compliance with CMS regulations. Prior to visitors entering a facility, they will be screened and a COVID-19 test will be provided. A complete listing of updated visitation requirements for long-term care facilities is available at: <https://bit.ly/3ezaxNC>. Expanded visitation opportunities allowed by the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) updated guidelines allowing touch for fully-vaccinated residents and less restrictive quarantine procedures for fully-vaccinated residents.

CMH facilities have additional opportunities for family and friends to stay connected to residents by using Skype, FaceTime, phone calls and email, as well as following facility social media pages. Citizens Memorial Health Care Foundation owns and operates our facilities and has taken additional steps to provide devices for each facility allowing additional preventative measures to minimize the risk of coronavirus exposures to our residents and staff.

We have implemented enhanced virtual visits with providers and specialists. Our goal is to limit the number of outside contacts and potential exposures to COVID-19. We will coordinate provider visits and procedures on a case by case basis. These are based on clinical indications, resident choice and provider input. Additional caution is made to assure transportation and external exposure is minimized. Residents wear masks during transportation and effort is made to limit transportation service companies, to allow for proper disinfecting and following needed precautions. Residents are assessed upon return to determine if close contact with COVID-19 positive person has occurred, and appropriate quarantine and testing is implemented.

We have restricted and revamped group activities within our facilities to help reduce the potential spread, including social distancing, enhanced sanitation and disinfecting and not deterring common touch points for items needed for activities. We have increased the number of one on one visits and room activities to keep residents involved.

In order to assure we are communicating as quick and often as needed we want to assure responsible parties have given us the most current emergency contact information for themselves including email addresses, so we can continue to keep them informed should there be any new developments. The responsible party will be responsible for providing individual updates regarding the status of their resident to family and friends. Residents have the right to determine who and when information is provided.

Testing residents and staff for COVID-19 in long-term care is becoming an increasingly important focus. The American Health Care Association/National Centers for Assisted Living (AHCA/NCAL) along with the CDC are providing guidance on testing in long-term care facilities.

CMH Foundation long-term care facilities, including this one, will test new admissions/readmissions into the facility, as appropriate per CMS/DHSS guidance. We will also be testing new employees to long-term care. While the increase in testing in our facility may cause the public to be alarmed, rest assured this is an important addition to other infection prevention and control recommendations aimed at keeping COVID-19 out of our facilities, detecting any future cases quickly and stopping transmission.

Our ultimate goal is to decrease the risk of viral outbreaks in our long-term care facilities. In order to do this, two processes are in place. First, efforts continue to focus on how to decrease the introduction of viruses into the facility. Second, steps to decrease the spread of a virus between residents are in place and monitored consistently. Even then, outbreaks may still occur. We have reviewed and updated processes as needed, 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.

Universal masking began the beginning of April 2020 and has been in place ever since. Staff use appropriate cleaning products on surfaces that are cytotoxic for common viral infections and change these cleaning products when the harder to kill infectious agents are identified and require special cleaning products, such as C. diff, norovirus and adenovirus, which are readily available to the facility staff.

CMS issued updated infection control regulations for nursing homes in November 2016. These regulations were designed to help decrease the risk of infectious outbreaks in nursing facilities and require each nursing facility to have a plan which describes: an infection prevention and control program, which includes Antibiotic Stewardship and designate at least one Infection Preventionist per facility. Facilities have a system of surveillance designed to identify possible communicable diseases or infections before they can spread to other persons in the facility. The plan includes when and to whom possible incidents of communicable disease or infections should be reported. The plan outlines standard and transmission-based precautions to be followed to prevent spread of infections. When and how isolation should be used for a resident; including but not limited to: the type and duration of the isolation, depending upon the infectious agent or organism involved, and a requirement that the isolation should be the least restrictive possible for the resident under the circumstances.

The plan includes the circumstances under which the facility must prohibit employees with a communicable disease or infected skin lesions from direct contact with residents or their food, if direct contact will transmit the disease. The hand hygiene procedures to be followed by staff involved in direct resident contact. The CMS regulations also require each nursing facility to designate at least one employee to serve as an Infection Preventionist, who is both a clinician Registered or Licensed Nurse and has received additional training and certification in infection control.

The Infection Preventionist for this facility is Shane Snodgrass, RN, and the Director of Nursing is Catherine Bird, RN.

The Department of Health and Senior Services have conducted telephone and on-site Infection Prevention Focused Survey at Ash Grove Healthcare Facility multiple times since the beginning of the pandemic, and has been found the facility to be in substantial compliance with no cited deficiencies.