

April 24, 2020

Dear Small Group Home and Congregate Housing Providers,

Re: Heightened Practices Required to Mitigate COVID-19 Outbreaks in Small Group Home and Congregate Housing Facilities

The COVID-19 pandemic is adversely affecting all of us; however, its impact is seen more acutely in our most vulnerable Howard County residents including those residing in small group homes and congregate housing. The Maryland Department of Health has provided guidance about [2019 Novel Coronavirus \(2019-nCoV\) and Congregate Housing](#). This guidance is intended for smaller congregate living facilities such as residential treatment centers and group homes. It is based on recommendations from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Maryland Department of Health (MDH). This guidance is not intended for nursing homes or long-term care facilities.

Extra measures must be implemented in LTCF to effectively mitigate the impact of this unprecedented pandemic on our community's vulnerable residents. Guidance for screening of individuals entering facilities or group homes prior to entry with questions about symptoms and exposures; ensuring staff are aware of sick leave policies and are encouraged to stay home if they have symptoms of COVID-19; and environmental cleaning and disinfection can be found at <https://coronavirus.maryland.gov/pages/hcf-resources>.

Reporting and Management of Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19 Outbreak

An outbreak in a small group home or other congregate residential facility is defined as one or more confirmed cases of COVID-19 in a resident or staff member.

Report suspected or known outbreaks by contacting the Howard County Health Department COVID-19 Information Line Monday-Friday 8am-5pm, please call 410-313-6284. After-hours and weekends, please call 410-313-2929.

- Provide the following information:
 - Name & location of facility
 - Facility point of contact (POC) Email & phone(s)
 - Facility description (Type of Care Provided, Highest level of on-sight care provided, if multiple levels of care provided, delineate residents into the levels)
 - Total capacity (total staffed beds) and current level of capacity (# of actual residents) and Isolation capabilities
- Resident Description:
 - # of symptomatic residents
 - Condition of symptomatic residents
 - # of possible exposures/# of residents exposed

Maura J. Rossman, M.D., Health Officer

- Staffing Description:
 - # of total staff
 - # of symptomatic staff/# of staff isolating/in quarantine

The Howard County Health Department will assist with identifying potential needs and coordination with the Maryland Department of Health and other agencies. If you are a health care organization actively treating patients and need PPE, click [HERE](#) for the State of Maryland PPE Request form. When completed, send to hocoPPErequests@howardcountymd.gov. (Please understand that not all requests can be accommodated due to limited supply.) An approved PPE vendor list may be found [HERE](#).

COVID-19 demands that we meet these extraordinary requirements to ensure we promote, preserve, and protect the health of all Howard County residents, especially the most vulnerable of our population. **Your immediate attention is expected and appreciated to ensure above practices within your LTCF.**

Sincerely,



Maura J. Rossman, MD
Health Officer, Howard County