Ohio | Department of Health

Mike DeWine, Governor
Jon Husted, Lt. Governor

Amy Acton, M.D., MPH, Director

DIRECTOR'S ORDER

In Re: Amended Order to Limit Access to Ohio's Nursing Homes and Similar Facilities

I, Amy Acton, MD, MPH, Director of the Ohio Department of Health (ODH), pursuant to the authority granted to me in R.C. §§ 3701.13; 3721, to prevent the spread of contagions or infectious diseases, hereby order all "Homes," as that term is defined by R.C. § 3721.01 and to include Intermediate Care Facilities for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities, to:

1. Restrict access to all Homes only to those personnel who are absolutely necessary for the operation of the Homes. People who are "absolutely necessary for the operations of the Homes" include, but may not be limited to, home staff, contracted and emergency healthcare providers, contractors conducting critical on-site maintenance, and governmental representatives and regulators and their contractors. No visitors of residents shall be admitted to any Home, except for end-of-life situations.

2. Restrict access to all Homes only to those personnel who have been screened for COVID-19 each time they enter Homes. Screening guidance is available from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, as well as from the Ohio Department of Health. Screening should include questions about exposure to COVID-19 and assessing visitors and personnel for cough, shortness of breath, and body temperatures of 100.4 degrees and higher. This order does not apply in exigent circumstances, to emergency medical services, first responders and similarly situated individuals.

3. Restrict access to all Homes to as few points of entry as is possible, with the Ohio Department of Health recommending one (1) point of entry. This does not apply to emergency ingress or egress of facilities.

4. Restrict access to all Homes only to those persons who produce legal federal- or state-issued identification, other satisfactory identification, or are a known person, and provide the Homes with business telephone numbers and addresses. It is the responsibility of the Homes to log such information, maintaining it for at least six (6) months.

5. Allow residents to discharge from Homes at any time and in accordance with applicable state and federal law, understanding that residents that then return to the Homes while this Order is in effect are subject to the directives above.

6. Comply with infection control precautions located in Ohio Administrative Code 3701-17-11(D) and 3701-16-12(C).

COVID-19 is a respiratory disease that can result in serious illness or death, is caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, which is a new strain of coronavirus that had not been previously identified in humans and can easily spread from person to person. The virus is spread between individuals who are in close contact with each other (within about six feet) through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. It may be possible that individuals can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose or eyes.

Currently, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) lists over 110 countries with confirmed cases of COVID-19. The World Health Organization reports over 135,000 diagnosed cases worldwide with over 5,000 deaths reported worldwide. The CDC has announced 1,629 confirmed and presumptive positive cases, with 41 deaths reported from the disease in the United States.

On January 23, 2020, the Ohio Department of Health issued a Director's Journal Entry making COVID-19 a Class A reportable disease in Ohio.

On January 28, 2020, the Ohio Department of Health hosted the first statewide call with local health departments and healthcare providers regarding COVID-19.

On January 30, 2020, the International Health Regulations Emergency Committee of the World Health Organization declared the outbreak of COVID-19 a public health emergency of international concern.

On January 31, 2020, Health and Human Services Secretary, Alex M. Azar II, declared a public health emergency for the United States to aid the nation's healthcare community in responding to COVID-19.

On February 1, 2020, the Ohio Department of Health issued a statewide Health Alert Network to provide local health departments and healthcare providers with updated guidance for COVID-19 and revised Person Under Investigation (PUI) criteria.

On February 3, 2020, the Ohio Department of Health trained over 140 personnel to staff a call center for COVID-19, in the event it was needed.

On February 5, 2020, the Ohio Department of Health began updating and notifying the media of the number of PUIs in Ohio every Tuesday and Thursday.

On February 6, 2020, the Ohio Department of Health updated all agency assistant directors and chiefs of staff on COVID-19 preparedness and status during the Governor's cabinet meeting.

On February 7, 2020, the Ohio Department of Health and the Ohio Emergency Management Agency met to conduct advance planning for COVID-19.

On February 13, 2020, the Ohio Department of Health conducted a Pandemic Tabletop Exercise with State agencies to review responsive actions should there be a pandemic in Ohio.

On February 14, 2020, the Ohio Department of Health held a conference call with health professionals across the state. The purpose of the call was to inform and engage the healthcare community in Ohio.

Presentations were provided by the Department of Health, Hamilton County Public Health, and the Ohio State University.

On February 27, 2020, the Ohio Department of Health and the Ohio Emergency Management Agency briefed the directors of State agencies during the Governor's cabinet meeting regarding preparedness and the potential activation of the Emergency Operations Center.

On February 28, 2020, the "Governor DeWine, Health Director Update COVID-19 Prevention and Preparedness Plan" was sent to a broad range of associations representing healthcare, dental, long-term care, K-12 schools, colleges and universities, business, public transit, faith-based organizations, non-profit organizations, and local governments.

On March 2, 2020, the Ohio Department of Health activated a Joint Information Center to coordinate COVID-19 communications.

On March 5, 2020, the Ohio Department of Health hosted the Governor's Summit on COVID-19 Preparedness, a meeting with the Governor, cabinet agency directors, local health department commissioners, and their staff.

On March 6, 2020, the Ohio Department of Health opened a call center to answer questions from the public regarding COVID-19.

On March 9, 2020, testing by the Department of Health confirmed that three (3) patients were positive for COVID-19 in the State of Ohio. This confirms the presence of a potentially dangerous condition which may affect the health, safety and welfare of citizens of Ohio.

On March 9, 2020, the Ohio Emergency Management Agency activated the Emergency Operations Center.

On March 9, 2020, the Governor Declared a State of Emergency in Executive Order 2020-01D.

On March 11, 2020, the head of the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic.

On March 11, 2020, testing by the Ohio Department of Health confirmed an additional patient was positive for COVID-10 in the State of Ohio.

On March 12, 2020, the Ohio Department of Health issued a Director's Order to prohibit mass gatherings in the State of Ohio.

On March 12, 2020, testing by the Ohio Department of Health confirmed that one (1) more patient was positive for COVID-19 in the State of Ohio.

Multiple areas of the United States are experiencing "community spread" of the virus that causes COVID-19. Community spread, defined as the transmission of an illness for which the source is unknown, means that isolation of known areas of infection is no longer enough to control spread.

The CDC reports that people are most contagious when they are most symptomatic (the sickest) however some spread might be possible before people show symptoms although that is not the main way the virus spreads.

Residents of nursing homes in the State of Ohio are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 due to age and underlying illnesses.

Accordingly, to avoid an imminent threat to Home residents of exposure to COVID-19, I hereby **ORDER** that Homes do all of the following:

Restrict access to all Homes only to those personnel who are absolutely necessary for the operation of the Homes. People who are "absolutely necessary for the operations of the Homes" include, but may not be limited to, home staff, contracted and emergency healthcare providers, contractors conducting critical on-site maintenance, and governmental representatives and regulators and their contractors. No visitors of residents shall be admitted to any Home, except for end-of-life situations. Restrict access to all Homes only to those personnel who have been screened for COVID-19 each time they enter Homes. Screening guidance is available from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, as well as from the Ohio Department of Health. Screening should include questions about exposure to COVID-19 and assessing visitors and personnel for cough, shortness of breath, and body temperatures of 100.4 degrees and higher. This order does not apply in exigent circumstances, to emergency medical services, first responders and similarly situated individuals. Restrict access to all Homes to as few points of entry as is possible, with the Ohio Department of Health recommending one (1) point of entry. This does not apply to emergency ingress or egress of facilities. Restrict access to all Homes only to those persons who produce legal federal- or state-issued identification, other satisfactory identification, or are a known person, and provide the Homes with business telephone numbers and addresses. It is the responsibility of the Homes to log such information, maintaining it for at least six (6) months. Allow residents to discharge from Homes at any time and in accordance with applicable state and federal law, understanding that residents that then return to the Homes while this Order is in effect are subject to the directives above. Comply with infection control precautions located in Ohio Administrative Code 3701-17-11(D) and 3701-16-12(C).

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Director of Health

March 13, 2020