

DHSS Announces First Long-Term Care Facility Coronavirus-Related Death; More Cases Confirmed in Newark Nursing Home

SMYRNA (March 26, 2020) – The Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) is announcing the first long-term care facility coronavirus-related death in Delaware and the first outbreak of positive cases in such a facility.

The death of an 86-year-old male resident of Little Sisters of the Poor Jeanne Jugan Residence in Newark was reported today to DHSS' Division of Public Health. The individual had underlying medical conditions. This is the second coronavirus-related death in the state. The death of a 66-year-old man from Sussex County was announced earlier today.

In addition, six residents of the Newark nursing home tested positive for COVID-19, according to the Division of Public Health. DHSS is actively working with the facility to ensure resident and staff safety.

“We are deeply saddened to hear of this individual’s death,” said DHSS Secretary Dr. Kara Odom Walker, a practicing family physician. “The population who lives in these facilities are at the greatest risk for COVID-19, based on their age and underlying health conditions. Unfortunately, this death and the confirmed cases at this facility underscore the need for all long-term care facilities in Delaware to follow strict screening protocols for anyone entering their facilities.”

On March 13, 2020, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) issued aggressive measures for nursing homes

nationwide to follow with respect to safety at their facilities:

- Restricting all visitors, effective immediately, with exceptions for compassionate care, such as end-of-life situations;
- Restricting all volunteers and nonessential health care personnel and other personnel (i.e. barbers);
- Cancelling all group activities and communal dining;
- Implementing active screening of residents and health care personnel for fever and respiratory systems.

In cases of compassionate care, CMS advises that visitors will be equipped with personal protective equipment (PPE) such as masks, and the visits will be limited to a specific room. On March 16, DHSS issued further restrictive and specific guidance to all facilities serving older adults, including screening protocols for visitors, requirements for disinfecting rooms, and reinforcing resident and staff hygiene.

Secretary Walker said DHSS' Division of Health Care Quality (DHCQ) will work closely with long-term care facilities in the state to verify that these strong measures are in place at each facility, and if, not, to assist them in implementing stronger protocols.