

**Communicable Disease Epidemiology  
and Immunization Section**

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April 23, 2020

**To: Long Term Care Facility (LTCF) Administrators in King County**

**From: Dr. Jeff Duchin, Health Officer, Public Health — Seattle & King County (PHSKC)**

**Re: COVID-19 testing protocol for residents and staff of LTCFs**

Dear Facility Administrator,

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to have a disproportionate and severe impact on residents and staff of long term care facilities (LTCF) in Washington state and nationally. In response, [Washington State Department of Health \(DOH\)](#) and the [US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) have issued guidance for COVID-19 prevention and response in LTCF emphasizing early detection of COVID-19 cases.

It has become apparent that older adults with COVID-19 may not show typical symptoms such as fever or respiratory symptoms; atypical symptoms may include new or worsening malaise, new dizziness, or diarrhea. Identification of these symptoms should prompt isolation and further evaluation for COVID-19. In addition, recent evidence suggests residents of LTCF may be infected with COVID-19 while asymptomatic.

For these reasons and given the continued widespread COVID-19 activity in our region and difficulty in recognizing COVID-19 in residents of LTCF, Public Health recommends that LTCF take all potential steps to identify infections early. This includes, when possible, testing all residents and staff of LTCF on a voluntary basis even before a case has been confirmed in the facility in order to identify unrecognized cases and facilitate disease control measures.

To assist with testing in LTCF (including those that have not yet identified a COVID-19 case) Public Health has enlisted the help of regional health system partners and first responder agencies and as capacity allows, we are available to assist you with training, obtaining test kits and direct assistance if needed.

If you have questions or concerns about this recommendation please contact Dr. James Lewis, COVID-19 Acute Healthcare System Support Lead, [james.lewis@kingcounty.gov](mailto:james.lewis@kingcounty.gov). In addition to testing, Public Health is available to provide infection control and prevention consultation. For more information please review our [Public Health Recommendations for Long Term Care Facilities](#). For other health care related COVID questions please reach out to the PHSKC COVID-19 call center, 206-477-3977, and ask to speak with a team member about recommended testing in LTCFs and they will route you to the appropriate team member.

Sincerely,



Jeff Duchin, MD,  
Health Officer, Public Health Seattle & King County (PHSKC)