

EMS and Long-Term Care (LTC) Facility Patient Movement May 20, 2020

To all LTC and EMS agencies:

COVID-19 is affecting about 20% of long-term care facilities in the State, as well as many group homes and other congregate settings. In several recent situations, EMS has been placed in difficult situations being asked to transport multiple persons from a facility to the hospital due to factors such as lack of staff, lack of PPE, or perceived inability to isolate the resident.

If a patient is acutely ill, EMS should always transport the resident to the hospital. If the facility is requesting multiple residents be transferred to the hospital and, in the opinion of the EMS provider there is not a medical emergency, there is very little benefit and, in fact, significant problems associated with moving multiple residents to a hospital.

Minnesota Department of Health / Health Regulations Division (MDH HRD) and usually the LTC Ombudsman MUST be involved in decisions about moving multiple residents of a facility unless the facility is being evacuated in an emergency situation such as a fire.

EMS providers asked to move multiple non-emergent resident transfers should:

- Contact the State Duty Officer at 651-649-5451 and request the EMSRB on-call staff
- EMSRB will coordinate with the Statewide Healthcare Coordination Center (SHCC) on-call
- EMS agencies should also follow their regional protocols for communications and operations with their healthcare multi-agency coordination center

In most cases the following steps can be taken to address the situation:

- Temporary isolation of the positive patient(s) until the MDH Infection Prevention and HRD personnel can discuss the situation with the facility and provide recommendations
- Providing the facility with an emergency supply of PPE
- Assistance with emergency staffing

Evacuating residents from a LTC facility involves significant risk to both residents and EMS providers and should only be undertaken when:

- MDH HRD agrees that the residents are in immediate jeopardy due to an administrative and staffing situation that cannot be addressed through regional and State resources.
- There is no effective way to isolate the ill residents – in this case, LTC-LTC transfer is a better solution than taking residents to hospitals and this can be facilitated

Planning for potential situations ahead of time with your Regional Healthcare Coalition can help greatly to assure a coordinated response. If you have general questions about criteria for evacuation or long-term care issues please contact the LTC call center at 612-875-5319.