

The Idaho State Ombudsman Program is working with Assistive Technology to develop training materials for staff so they can help residents who have cognitive, sight and hearing loss to better communicate with their loved ones. The ombudsman has been surveying needs and limitations within assisted livings and nursing homes to determine which facilities are able to provide access to families and by what means i.e. phone, tablet, laptops. Ombudsmen are providing names of facilities that need telecommunication options, so facilities can have access to the Assistive Technology lending library.

The Ombudsmen continue to advocate for the health, safety, welfare and rights of residents and offer support to residents and families in this challenging time by providing information, mediating and working to resolve complaints.

Instead of going into the facilities the ombudsman is now making frequent calls to residents to check on how the conditions in the facility are to assure that resident needs are being met.

Vulnerable residents are at risk of eviction during this difficult time and being in danger of becoming homeless. We are working with our Deputy Attorney General to determine ways to protect our residents during this COVID-19 crisis.

The State Long Term Care Ombudsman participates on the Governors STRIKE Team bi-weekly and weekly on the Assisted Living Regional Response Team to prepare for COVID-19 in Idaho.

Amanda Scott
Idaho State LTC Ombudsman

Long-term Care Facility Strike Team Action Items Status Update 4/3/2020

In Idaho, long-term care facilities include skilled nursing facilities (SNFs) and assisted living facilities. The four focus areas of the long-term care facility (LTCF) strike team are:

- I. Infection control
- II. Staffing
- III. Reducing utilization of hospital beds when possible
- IV. Information dissemination

New Action Items/Action Items in Progress

I. Infection Control and Prevention

- A) Division of Licensing and Certification is hosting weekly statewide conference calls with all 82 SNFs to disseminate information and address questions and challenges SNFs are facing related to infection control and preventing spread of the virus when a resident tests positive for COVID-19.
Estimated completion date: Starting 3/26/2020 and ongoing
- B) Division of Licensing and Certification has established regular calls with all 284 assisted living facilities to disseminate information and address questions and challenges assisted living facilities are facing related to infection control and preventing the spread of the virus when a resident tests positive for COVID-19.
Estimated Completion Date: Wednesday, April 8th and ongoing
- C) Working with AARP Idaho, the Idaho Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association, the Idaho Commission on Aging, and U of I's Assistive Technology Program, develop a master list of resources to support facilities in offering virtual visits between residents and loved ones and publish resources and information about how facilities can conduct virtual visits.
Estimated Completion Date: Friday, April 24th
- D) Review guidance issued by the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers related to negative pressure, increased air flow, UV light and Ionization Air Purification Devices for possible dissemination to hospitals and skilled nursing facilities.
Estimated Completion Date: Tuesday, April 7th

II. Staffing

- A) Enlisted the Idaho Department of Labor to use their social media and messaging capabilities to announce the need for staff in long-term care facilities, particularly assisted living facilities.
Completion date: 3/25/2020 and ongoing
- B) Work with assisted living facilities to create a list of facilities that are seeking additional staff and actively hiring.
Estimated completion date: 3/31/2020 and ongoing
- C) Division of Licensing and Certification requested national blanket waiver from CMS to waive testing for lapsed CNA certification (in order to get those out of workforce for more than 2 years back into workforce quickly).
Estimated completion date: Monday, 3/23/2020; awaiting CMS approval

III. Reducing Utilization of Hospital Beds by LTCF Patients When Possible

- A) Developed schematic for establishing an interim care facility where LTCF COVID-19+ patients who do not require or no longer require hospitalization can be cared for while on transmission-based precautions.
Completion date: Friday, March 20th, 2020 and ongoing
- B) Identify facilities that are willing/able to serve as an interim care facility as described above. Initial list developed on March 31st, and the strike team continues to identify and contact facilities that may be used as interim care facilities.
Estimated completion date: Monday, March 31st and ongoing
- C) Explore residential options for ALF residents who are being evaluated for COVID-19 but do not require hospitalization, since ALF facilities have limited ability to implement appropriate infection control practices.
Estimated completion date: ongoing
- D) Developed a set of algorithms to depict the possible flow of patients to alternative care facilities for the following scenarios:
 - a. Separate algorithm for SNF that can test suspected COVID-19 patients with the patient staying in the facility for testing
 - b. Separate algorithm for SNF/ALF that cannot keep a patient in the facility for testing
 - c. Uses temporary care facility as name for facility for transfer for recovery/testing to ensure COVID negative prior to returning to LTCF
 - d. Lists test negative for COVID as criteria to transfer back to LTCF

IV. Information Dissemination

- A) Using a plan developed by the Idaho Division of Veterans Services, post resources for facilities to develop plans for crisis communication to families and facility staff and for communication with the media.
Estimated Completion Date: Monday, April 20th
- B) ECHO Idaho to host special COVID-19 session on Tuesday, March 24th, 12-1:30 pm, with focus on elderly and LTCF. Dr. Carolyn Bridges and Dr. Megan Dunay (geriatrician) will serve as panelists.
Estimated completion date: Tuesday, 3/24/2020 and ongoing as strike team members continue to participate in ECHO Idaho sessions.
- C) Assemble resource list for LTCFs based on input from strike team members and post on coronavirus.idaho.gov website.
Estimated completion date: Thursday, 3/26/2020 and ongoing as additional resources are identified
- D) Developed guidance for SNFs and assisted living facilities about what to do when a resident is suspected to have COVID-19. This guidance has been posted to the coronavirus.idaho.gov web site.
Completion Date: Thursday, April 2nd

- E) Develop/maintain guidance related to COVID-19 testing in long-term care facilities.
Estimated completion date: Friday, April 10th and ongoing
- F) Participate in weekly AARP Town Hall Teleconferences to answer questions pertaining to strike team activities.
Estimated Completion Date: March 17th and ongoing
- G) Develop information for long-term care facilities related to antibody (serologic) testing.
Estimated Completion Date: Monday: Tuesday, April 21st

Previously Reported Action Items/Action Items Completed to Date (reverse chronological order)

- 1) DHW's Criminal History Unit has waived the time frame for fingerprinting to allow faster completion of background checks for new facility staff.
Completion date: Friday, 3/20/2020
- 2) Division of Licensing and Certification contacted all nursing homes, home health agencies, and end stage renal disease centers to ensure they have the recently issued CMS Telemedicine Toolkit.
Completion date: Saturday, 3/21/2020
- 3) Post on Idaho Commission on Aging website changes to volunteer ombudsmen visitation including suspension of all non-critical visits and handling of complaints using non-face-to-face methods.
Completion date: Monday, 3/23/2020
- 4) Idaho Board of Nursing has temporarily revised the process for various applications to support the COVID-19 response and ensure adequate nursing personnel. Board of Nursing distributed this information to nurses across the state.
Completion date: Friday, 3/20/2020
- 5) Contact all college health chairs to communicate to nursing students the need for direct care staff in their local community assisted living facilities and nursing facilities.
Completion date: Friday, 3/20/2020
- 6) PPE czar to hold in reserve from state stockpile certain amount of PPE for all LTCFs.
Completion date: Monday, 3/23/2020
- 7) Division of Licensing and Certification to conduct telephone calls to all Assisted Living Facilities (ALFs) to ensure they have infection control and prevention information and to inquire about staffing and other concerns.
Completion date: Wednesday, 3/25/2020

- 8) "Long-term Care" tab created on coronavirus.idaho.gov website for easier navigation to LTCF resources.
Completed on Wednesday, 3/18/2020
- 9) CDC/CMS guidance adapted for assisted living facilities and health alert encouraging all facilities to notify public health as early as possible regarding any cluster of respiratory illness posted to the coronavirus.idaho.gov website.
Completed on 3/16/2020 and 3/18/2020, respectively
- 10) Statewide conference call with all nursing homes to review guidance that came from CMS on Friday, March 13th related to restricting visitation and limits on survey activity.
Completed on Tuesday, 3/17/2020
- 11) Suspend all survey/inspection activity except for investigation of complaints that allege immediate harm to residents (including alleged abuse), investigation of infection control concerns, or upon receipt of information about risks to residents that requires on-site presence to investigate. In lieu of surveys, surveyors will contact individual facilities and providers to ensure they are connected to the information, guidance, and resources they need.
Completed on Monday, 3/16/2020
- 12) Adapt CDC and CMS guidance for infection prevention and control in nursing homes to the assisted living setting and distribute to Idaho assisted living facilities via web portal.
Completed on Saturday, 3/14/2020
- 13) Send out health alert encouraging facilities to notify public health as early as possible regarding any cluster of respiratory illnesses.
Completed on Friday, 3/13/2020
- 14) Conduct PPE inventory of all SNFs, assisted living facilities, ambulatory surgical centers, and end-stage renal disease centers.
Estimated completion date: To be conducted by Preparedness team.

Tamara Prisock, Administrator
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