

This announcement is in response to the new coronavirus that has recently been identified, COVID-19. This virus is one of many coronaviruses that can affect humans. The COVID-19 can cause symptoms ranging from mild to very severe. Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure and can include fever, cough and shortness of breath. Transmission of COVID-19 is person to person via airborne particles and may also include other infectious secretions.

CDC guidelines must be followed for preventing spread of respiratory infections and caring for patients/residents/clients. Hand washing, use of alcohol-based hand sanitizer and use of tissues for coughs are the basic steps that should be used at this time. Training employees to care for patients appropriately is stressed. Use of personal protective equipment must be used, as with all other respiratory illnesses. When caring for a patient with COVID-19, use of eye protection (goggles or face shield), NIOSH-approved N95 respirators, gowns and gloves must be used. Environmental cleaning and disinfection procedures should be employed as well as management of laundry, food service utensils and medical waste.

Providers must report any positive COVID-19 illness in patients/residents/clients and employees to the local health department and OHFLAC. As part of the notification to OHFLAC, the following information must be provided:

1. Name of individual confirmed or suspected to have COVID-19;
2. Date of confirmed or suspected virus; and
3. Date the County Health Department was notified.

More information and details about COVID-19 can be found at the CDC's website at <http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov>, DHHR's main website at <https://dhhr.wv.gov/Coronavirus%20Disease-COVID-19/Pages/default.aspx>, CMS's website for QSO memos at <https://www.cms.gov/medicare/provider-enrollment-and-certification/surveycertificationgeninfo/policy-and-memos-to-states-and-regions.html> and DHHR's information hotline at 1-800-887-4304.