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New Jersey Veterans Memorial Homes

Infectious Disease Outbreak Response Plan

Purpose:

PURPOSE: To protect our residents, families, and staff from harm resulting from an outbreak of an infectious disease organism while in the Veterans Memorial Home (VMH)

Definitions:

"Outbreak" means any unusual occurrence of disease or any disease above background or endemic levels.

"Cohorting" means the practice of grouping residents who are or are not colonized or infected with the same organism to confine their care to one area and prevent contact with other patients.

"Isolating" means the process of separating sick, contagious persons from those who are not sick.

Procedure:

General Preparedness for Infectious Disease Outbreak

- The VMH emergency operation program will include a response plan for a community-wide infectious disease outbreak, such as; pandemic influenza, COVID-19, etc. This plan builds on the best workplace practices and lessons learned from previous outbreaks and follows the infection prevention and control policies of the VMH. The Administration is actively involved as are all facility staff in the response to an Infectious Disease Outbreak.

PPE and Other Supplies

- As part of the emergency operations Outbreak Plan, the VMH will maintain a supply of personal protective equipment (PPE) including isolation gowns, face shields, surgical masks, disposable N95 respirators, and gloves. The amount that is stockpiled, to the extent possible, will be maintained at an eight-week supply based on a COVID-19 census maximum burn rate.
- The VMH will maintain a stockpile of essential cleaning and disinfectant agents.

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- The VMH has formulated a plan with their vendors for re-supply of food, medications, sanitizing agents and PPE in the event of a disruption to normal business including an Outbreak.

Infection Preventionist

- The Infection Preventionist (IP) is responsible for conducting routine audits of Infection Control Practices in the VMH.
- The Infection Preventionist is responsible for establishing and implementing policies and procedures for screening residents, visitors and staff for exposure to, and signs and symptoms of, serious infectious diseases.
- At the beginning of an Outbreak, the Infection Preventionist will initiate a line listing and report Outbreak information to the local and state Health Departments as required.
- The VMH's Infection Preventionist will educate staff regarding the specific signs, symptoms, incubation period, and route(s) of infection, the risks of exposure, and the recommendations for skilled nursing facilities as provided by the CDC, including the review of basic infection prevention and control, use of PPE, isolation, and other infection prevention strategies such as hand washing.
- The IP will collaborate with the VMH's medical director or clinical consultant, safety officer, human resource director, local and state public health authorities, and others as appropriate, regarding interventions to implement in response to an Infectious Outbreak.
- The IP will post signs regarding hand sanitation and respiratory etiquette and/or other prevention strategies relevant to the route(s) of infection at the entry of the VMH along with the instruction that anyone who is sick must not enter the building.

Screening

- To ensure that staff, and/or new residents are not at risk of spreading the Outbreak organism into the VMH, screening for exposure risk and signs and symptoms will be done PRIOR to admission of a new resident and prior to staff beginning their shift at work. During an Outbreak visitors, volunteers, and non-essential personnel may not be permitted entrance into certain areas of the building or the entire facility.
- Staff are asked to self-screen for symptoms consistent with the Outbreak prior to reporting to work and report these symptoms to their supervisor for further instructions. The supervisor will inform the IP of the staff member's symptoms.
- The VMH will prohibit staff from reporting to work if they are sick until cleared to do so by appropriate medical authorities or based on CDC guidance.

Visitor Restrictions/New Admissions

- In the event there are confirmed cases of the Outbreak in the local community, the VMH may consider closing the VMH to new admissions, and limiting visitors based on the advice of local or state or federal public health authorities. Alternative visitation arrangements (such as outdoor visitation) or methodologies (such as video calling) may be used as applicable and authorized.

Monitoring Residents

- All residents will be monitored daily for signs of illness. Upon the confirmation of an Infectious Disease Outbreak, all residents will be closely monitored for disease symptoms in order to quickly identify signs of illness.

Isolation and Cohorting of Infected Residents During an Outbreak

- The VMH will have a designated area to cohort residents infected with the same organism, as necessary, during an Outbreak. Residents infected with the same organism may have their care confined to one area to prevent contact with other residents and will remain in their rooms with the door closed to the extent possible.
- Based on the Infection Control Policy, staff will be required to wear PPE when caring for an infected resident to reduce risk of exposure based on transmission-based precautions.
- The VMH will minimize as much as possible the number of staff assigned to enter the room of the isolated person. Staff will be trained as per current CDC or DOH guidance. Additional “just in time” training and supervision on the mode of transmission of this Outbreak will be provided to staff.

Outbreak Interventions Implemented by the VMH

- All individuals entering the VMH or certain areas of the VMH may be required to wear a face mask in accordance with CMS, CDC and NJDOH guidance. Residents who cannot/will not wear a facemask must remain in their room, to the extent possible.
- Conduct control activities such as management of infectious wastes, terminal cleaning of the isolation room, contact tracing of exposed individuals, and monitoring for additional cases under the guidance of local health authorities, and in keeping with guidance from the CDC.
- Implement the isolation protocol in the VMH (isolation rooms, co-horting, cancelation of group activities and communal dining) as described in the VMH’s infection prevention and control plan and/or recommended by local, state, or federal public health authorities.
- Increase environmental cleaning and follow current CDC guidelines for environmental cleaning specific to the Outbreak organism in addition to routine cleaning for the duration of the threat.

- The VMH will review engineering controls in place and may utilize appropriate physical plant alterations such as use of private rooms for high-risk residents, plastic barriers, sanitation stations, and special areas for contaminated wastes as recommended by local, state, and federal public health authorities.

Staffing Plan

- The VMH will implement contingency staffing plans as needed; including Agency, Per-Diems, National Guard, Veterans Affairs, and staff mandatory overtime.

Testing

- The VMHs have arrangements with at least one laboratory to perform testing of residents and staff.
- The VMH will test any resident symptomatic for the Infectious organism and will conduct additional testing of residents and staff in accordance with DOH, CDC and CMS guidance.

Notification

- The VMH will provide notification of the Infectious Outbreak to residents, staff and families by 5:00 pm on the next calendar day the Outbreak is identified.
- The VMH will provide updates at least weekly on the status of the Outbreak.

References:

Sample Policy for Emergent Infectious Diseases for Skilled Nursing Care Centers, Compiled and Prepared by AHCA/NCAL Emergency Preparedness Washington, D.C. 20005.

https://www.caltcm.org/assets/AHCA_NCAL_Infectious_Disease_Sample_Policy.pdf

Accessed: 22 March 2020.

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