

## Coronavirus and Senior Living Facilities

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The outbreak of coronavirus [at a Seattle-area senior living facility](#) has heightened the alert level at similar facilities throughout the United States.

This increased awareness level has led to senior living facilities being inundated with health information about novel virus COVID-19, also known as coronavirus. Senior living facilities are ripe for coronavirus risk, since the elderly have proven to be particularly vulnerable.

While most facilities have protocols to combat seasonal flu epidemics, many remain concerned about their readiness to protect residents against the very serious health risks of coronavirus. A common theme running through all of the available information is a heavy emphasis on remaining calm and encouraging cooperation through education, training and full transparency.

Still, despite the information available about how best to cope with coronavirus, it is anticipated that most facilities will immediately send any suspected cases to the hospital for full evaluation and treatment. Given the small number of coronavirus cases identified in the U.S. to date, it is not anticipated that senior living facilities will be required to care for infected residents on site. Although circumstances may change, it is recommended that facilities remain prepared but focus primarily on:

- Preventing the introduction and potential spread of this virus within the community by training staff, managing visitors and promoting good hygiene throughout the facility
- Developing a communications plan for residents, staff and the public
- Quickly identifying and isolating suspected cases, and obtaining test kits if they become available
- Establishing contact with an infection control specialist and arranging for rapid transport of residents to the hospital, if needed

If a resident is suspected of having COVID-19, facilities should immediately implement CDC-recommended infection prevention and control practices. They also should notify the hospital that they are sending a resident for evaluation, as well as state health agencies if the resident is confirmed to have COVID-19. Some facilities also have implemented self-quarantine policies for residents and workers who have traveled to other countries or U.S. states with confirmed cases in accordance with CDC guidelines.

The World Health Organization, the Centers for Disease Control, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and many state agencies have published copious COVID-19-related materials. While much of this information relates to health care facilities, a number of publications provide information specifically for home and community settings, as well as general health recommendations that can be shared with staff and residents.

If you have any questions on your facility's preparedness for the coronavirus, or about the information currently available, please [contact me](#) or anyone in the [Barley Snyder Senior Living Group](#).

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