Interim Guidance on Visitation in Nursing Facilities During COVID-19

The Department of Health has received questions from nursing home facilities, associations, and constituents regarding best practices in nursing homes related to COVID-19 visitation policies. As of March 12, 2020, there are 19 presumptive positive cases and 2 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Pennsylvania, and there are no known cases in nursing homes. Yet, Pennsylvania has watched COVID-19 spread rapidly in nursing facilities in Washington State and is concerned about the well-being of older Pennsylvanians in nursing facilities. To that end, the Department is currently advising the following:

- If a nursing facility is located in an area where there are known cases of COVID-19, the Department recommends **a no visitor policy** in nursing facilities except in instances of end-of-life events that require visitation from immediate family members, friends, and religious leaders.
    o This is **immediately applicable to homes in Montgomery County and any bordering counties**.
    o In events such as those above, visitors should be screened in advance of coming into the facility through measures such as taking temperatures, asking visitors to use personal protective equipment, if available, using hand sanitizer before entering and upon exiting a resident's room, etc.

- If a nursing facility is not located in a county or area where there are known cases of COVID-19 but **assesses a no visitor policy to be in the best interest of residents, the Department supports that step at this time**.

Nursing facility staff and administrators should use screening protocols per their Emergency Preparedness and Infection Control Plan, too, and any health care providers who have signs or symptoms of a respiratory infection should not report to work. Please consult CMS, CDC, and PA DOH websites for further information.

Please refer to the Department's website for the most up-to-date information, or send questions to the Resource Account at RA-DHCoronavirus@pa.gov, or call us at 1-877-PA-HEALTH (1-877-724-3258).