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## **Health Department of Northwest Michigan Continues Working with Area Long-Term Care Facilities**

The Health Department of Northwest Michigan has an established a team working to address the needs of those living in congregate settings including long-term care facilities. Our goal is to ensure these facilities have access to the support and resources they need to keep their clients, residents, and employees safe. While this has been an ongoing process in our communities, one of the current priorities is to support community efforts to align with Executive Order 2020-50 that Governor Whitmer issued on April 15, 2020, which states “Due to the nature of the care provided in long-term care facilities and the vulnerable status of their residents, the risk of harm posed by a single positive case of COVID-19 to the entire facility—residents and staff—is inordinately high.”

“Many of these facilities face unique challenges as they serve high-risk and vulnerable populations, often in close quarters,” shared Lisa Peacock, Health Officer of the Health Department of Northwest Michigan. “Our team aims to provide these organizations with guidance and support in infection control, isolation, and quarantine measures, to ensure testing is quickly available when needed, and to provide support for their unique needs including decision points such as admissions, discharges, and transfers.”

In the Otsego County area, which has seen significant impact of COVID-19 we have worked closely with the community, including congregate living facilities, to ensure the very best protection of their staff and patients. This work is most effective when community partners work together which has been demonstrated by the swift response of facility and health department in collaborating to implement quick steps for isolation measures as well as Otsego Memorial Hospital in providing support for needed testing and care. Our local facilities, along with many long-term care providers throughout the nation, are working hard to battle the COVID-19 pandemic and we want to support them in providing the very best care for their residents.

“Otsego Memorial Hospital has taken drastic transformational measures in preparing and reacting to this pandemic. These independent efforts are necessary but approaching the issue through the coordinated efforts of the community is equally essential,” says Tom Lemon, CEO of Munson Healthcare Otsego Memorial Hospital. “By keeping an open line of communication between the hospital, congregate living facilities, and the Health Department we ensure a cohesive strategic response that best fits our community. Through our partnership, we have been able to support testing needs, supply necessary testing materials, and even offered to assist with procurement of necessary personal protective equipment. We are proud to reciprocate the support provided to us by our partners.”

*The Health Department of Northwest Michigan is mandated by the Michigan Public Health Code to promote wellness, prevent disease, provide quality healthcare, address health problems of vulnerable populations, and protect the environment for the residents and visitors of Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet, and Otsego counties. For more information, visit [nwhealth.org](http://nwhealth.org).*

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