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**April 22, 2020**

### **Health Department of Northwest Michigan COVID-19 Update**

The Health Department of Northwest Michigan has received questions about the safety of home care and home health workers during the COVID-19 response. We recognize the need for these agencies and their employees to have infection prevention guidance to continue providing the highest quality of care for the potentially high-risk populations they serve.

"It is a challenge to balance the care that these patients need with the desire to limit contact as much as possible and minimize the risk of disease transmission," shared Josh Meyerson, Medical Director. "The collective efforts of community members to stay home, coupled with continually expanding testing criteria and capacity, will help mitigate the impact of COVID-19 in our community, especially our most vulnerable members."

Most, if not all, home care and home health agencies have policies already in place to maintain the health and safety of employees and clients. The following list is not exhaustive. This information is not only intended to provide agencies with new or additional measures to protecting employees and clients, but also to provide residents with knowledge of the potential guidelines and protocols these agencies follow to ensure health and safety for all. Guidance for agencies and their employees shared by Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) include:

- Limit staff to provide only essential care needs.
- Educate patient family members about steps taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- Train staff on standard, contact, and droplet protections.
- Provide personal protective equipment (PPE) supplies and instructions/training for proper use. Refer to the [CDC guidelines for current recommendations](#) for PPE use for healthcare workers.
- Staff should complete a health screening prior to reporting to a work site other than their own residence.
- Staff should take PPE off outside the home. Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer before and after taking off and throwing away PPE.
- Schedule visits with people who have or may have COVID-19 at the end of the day to reduce the risk of spreading the virus during other visits.

It is important that home care and home health agencies have and follow guidelines or protocols to keep their employees and clients safe. Additional guidance and daily workplace health screenings for agencies or businesses and their employees can be found in our [Business Toolkit](#).

As of 4:00pm, the Health Department of Northwest Michigan is reporting positive COVID-19 cases in the following counties: Antrim – 9, Charlevoix – 12, Emmet – 21, Otsego – 80; and confirmed COVID-19 deaths in the following counties: Charlevoix – 1, Emmet – 2, Otsego – 6. The State of Michigan has reported 33,966 cases and 2,813 deaths.

Stay up to date on the latest information in the Health Department jurisdiction by [liking and following our Facebook page](#) and visiting our [COVID-19 Data Dashboard](#).

*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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