



STATE OF MICHIGAN

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

LANSING

GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

ROBERT GORDON
DIRECTOR

November 18, 2020

To: Medical Control Authorities

From: MDHHS Division of EMS and Trauma

RE: POTENTIAL FOR INCREASED EMS RESPONSES TO LONG TERM CARE FACILITIES FOR MINIMALLY AND ASYMPTOMATIC RESIDENTS WHO TEST POSITIVE FOR COVID-19 IN RESPONSE TO MDHHS EPIDEMIC ORDER

On October 18, 2020 MDHHS Director Robert Gordon issued the Epidemic Order, [Testing in Skilled Nursing Facilities, Homes for the Aged, and Adult Foster Care Facilities \(PDF\)](#). This calls upon increased testing for COVID-19 in skilled nursing homes, homes for the aged, and adult foster care facilities. Homes for the aged must begin testing no later than November 18, 2020. Testing requirements for certain adult foster care facilities begin on November 24, 2020.

With this increased testing it is reasonable to anticipate a significant increase in identified COVID-19 positive residents in these facilities. Consistent with past experiences, many, if not most, of these individuals will likely be asymptomatic or have only mild symptoms. Many of these facilities have in the past contacted EMS to transport the patients to hospital emergency departments. Frequently, these patients are not accepted back by these facilities, necessitating needless hospital admission. Because of the statewide surge in COVID-19, many hospitals are experiencing very high occupancy rates and do not have the capacity for inappropriate admissions. The transfer of asymptomatic and minimally symptomatic patients to the emergency department places an additional burden on our already stressed healthcare system, potentially jeopardizing the care of others who are truly in need.

In response to the potential increased EMS responses to these long-term care facilities, the Division of EMS and Trauma has prepared a new model Emergency System Protocol, *Stationary Treatment of Low Acuity and Asymptomatic Patients During COVID-19 Pandemic*. This protocol is being made available for immediate adoption by medical control authorities. It is intended to replace the Emergency System Protocol, *Telehealth and Stationary Treatment of Low Acuity Patients During COVID-19 Outbreak*. This new protocol is similar to the former protocol except for broadening the applicability to specifically include patients residing in skilled nursing facilities, homes for the aged, adult foster care homes, congregate living facilities, and healthcare communities. The new protocol also addresses asymptomatic patients who test positive for COVID-19 and make the use of an MCA-approved telemedicine application optional.

This protocol provides for paramedics, after having completed an appropriate assessment and consulted with medical control, to not transport the patient to the hospital. Instead, paramedics may assist the patient (and family and facility staff) with the development and implementation of an alternate treatment plan in which the patient remains at home (or in the facility). The intent of this protocol is to mitigate inappropriate patient transfers to the emergency department while taking reasonable and prudent measures to protect the well-being of asymptomatic and minimally symptomatic patients.

Medical control authorities are encouraged to consider adopting this protocol and to promptly communicate this to advanced life support agencies and their paramedics, physicians authorized to provide medical control, and to long-term care facilities. EMS agencies, medical control authorities, long-term care facilities, hospitals, local public health agencies, the Area Agency on Aging, and other stakeholders should work collaboratively to assure these vulnerable individuals receive the appropriate care at the appropriate location at the appropriate time. In the case of asymptomatic and minimally symptomatic COVID-19 residents, this can often be accomplished at the facility or residence, allowing transfer to the hospital to be safely deferred until (and if) the patient condition worsens.