

Voorhees and Marcella Centers: Response to National Guard announcement.

Voorhees and Marcella Centers, two skilled nursing facilities located in New Jersey, share their response to the State of New Jersey's announcement that it will send members of the National Guard to numerous nursing homes around the state to assist in managing coronavirus outbreaks:

Voorhees and Marcella Centers welcome the support that Governor Murphy is sending to its centers, along with other nursing homes around the state. However, it is important to understand that these two buildings have already begun to stabilize, and there are no current issues with staffing or personal protective equipment. Since the National Guard personnel are not clinicians, the centers have assembled the following non-clinical duties for their support, including: culinary services and logistics, assisting with room moves of patients, nurse aide assistance, laundry services, visits with residents, administrative detail, such as managing personal protective equipment (PPE) supply, and janitorial duties, such as cleaning and disinfecting.

In addition, the centers want to ensure the public has the facts about the COVID-19 outbreaks at these two centers, where they care largely for frail, elderly seniors with multiple health conditions who are already more susceptible to the common cold, not to mention a deadly and highly contagious virus like this one. The centers have been extremely vigilant about visitation restrictions and other infection control precautions – not only following recommended protocols and guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), but also often getting out in front of them (see precautionary list below).

Several other important facts:

- At both Voorhees and Marcella Centers, all residents who are COVID-19-positive are isolated in separate units away from those who do not have the virus.
- Neither center has had any issues obtaining and equipping its staff members with PPE at any time prior to or during this outbreak.
- As part of a large national network of facilities, neither center has had any issues ensuring adequate staffing, relying on support from sister centers and resources via temporary staffing agencies.
- As of May 10, 2020, Voorhees Center, a 190-bed facility (60 dedicated to memory care/dementia), has had 120 residents test positive for the virus, and an additional 28 residents tested positive and passed away; 38 staff members have tested positive, and none have died. Six (6) residents and 25 staff have recovered or are recovering.
- As of May 10, 2020, Marcella Center, a 150-bed facility (94 dedicated to memory care/dementia), has had 46 residents test positive for the virus, and an additional 32 residents tested positive and passed away; 25 staff members tested positive, and none have died. 20 residents and eight (8) staff have recovered or are recovering.

- Both centers have high concentrations of residents with dementia, making precautions and restrictions difficult to enforce, contributing to the spread. For example, it is not possible to confine patients who are cognitively impaired to their rooms, as they are prone to wandering. They are also often frightened by the protective equipment (e.g., masks, face shields, goggles). We are using techniques to distract and guide them to remain in their rooms and wear the protective equipment to the extent possible.
- The Centers have been fully transparent and forthcoming in sharing information with patients, residents and families. Families are provided with the latest information via daily video conference calls and report all cases to the New Jersey Department of Health (DOH) on a daily basis.

“COVID-19 is a complex virus that is hard to detect. People can be asymptomatic but positive, and the virus can take weeks to present itself,” notes Dr. Richard Feifer, Chief Medical Officer. “Despite all measures and preventive steps, the virus is still making its way into nursing homes across the nation and once it enters, this population is much more vulnerable to it.”

“Our thoughts and prayers go out to those impacted by COVID-19 during this difficult time, especially the families of those who have passed away. At this time, our primary concern is the safety and well-being of our patients, residents and employees. We are working around the clock, doing everything in our power – and everything medical experts know as of at this time – to protect and keep our patients, residents and employees as healthy and as safe as possible,” Feifer continued.

Precautionary Steps Voorhees Center and Marcella Center Have Taken Since Early March

Some of the precautionary steps and measures to protect residents at Voorhees Center and Marcella Center include (a full list can be found at www.genesishcc.com/coronavirus-timeline)

- Screening residents and patients for symptoms three times daily
- Actively screening and taking temperatures of all staff upon building entry
- Requiring all staff to wear personal protective equipment
- Visitation restrictions, except for exceptional circumstances, such as end-of-life situations
- Cancellation of all outside medical appointments, except for medically necessary, time-sensitive and life-saving treatments, such as dialysis and chemotherapy
- To make things easier for families, we have implemented the ability for families and loved ones to perform video conferencing calls using Zoom technology
- For any centers where positive cases arise, we notify patients, residents and families immediately, and update them daily via video conference calls