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Task Force Presents Recommendations to Further Protect Nursing Home Residents to Governor Whitmer

LANSING, MICH. To help protect the health and safety of Michigan's nursing home residents and staff, the Michigan Nursing Homes COVID-19 Preparedness Task Force, appointed by Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, presented [its final recommendations](#) on Monday, Aug. 31.

"I want to thank the members of the task force for their collaboration and support for the state's ongoing focus on protecting Michigan's most vulnerable populations," said Governor Whitmer. "I will carefully review these recommendations and continue to work closely with the task force and our partners to strengthen policies to protect nursing home residents, staff, and their families."

The 28 recommendations cover four strategy areas; each represented by a workgroup:

- Placement of Residents
- Resource Availability
- Staffing
- Quality of Life

Recommendations include:

- Continuing to use the regional hub program with strengthened guidance and protocols as Care and Recovery Centers.
- Identifying and coordinating with hospitals with excess surge capacity.
- Improving coordination of personal protective equipment distribution and allocation.
- Securing funding for continue testing of nursing home residents.
- Exploring options for creating dedicated facilities/alternative care settings.
- Improving support of physical and mental health for staff.
- Increasing opportunities for safe visitation.

[The Task Force](#) was co-chaired by Dr. Betty S. Chu, senior vice president and associate chief clinical officer/chief quality officer of Henry Ford Health System, and Roger Mali, II, owner and CEO of Mission Management Services, LLC in Troy, which specializes in skilled nursing care and senior housing management.

"We appreciate the Governor's focus on this vulnerable population and value the opportunity for this task force of multidisciplinary experts to be able to provide specific improvements through analysis of our Michigan experience and national data," said Chu.

"I am very pleased with the recommendations developed by the task force, and have full confidence that implementing these actions will improve the care, safety and wellness of Michigan's most vulnerable population," said Mali.

Many of these recommendations are reinforced by evaluations of long-term care policy conducted by independent organizations, including the Center for Health and Research Transformation (CHRT). Based on interviews with clinical and policy experts as well as emerging research, CHRT [presented independent recommendations](#) regarding how to strengthen and build upon Michigan's COVID-19 response that are also helping to inform the state's actions. The report was funded by the Michigan Health Endowment Fund.

CHRT reports that the regional hub strategy executed in a crisis situation was a logical and appropriate response to the surge. Although more data is needed to draw definitive conclusions, preliminary data shows:

- No significant evidence of transmission of COVID-19 between patients admitted from hospitals to nursing home residents in hub facilities.
- Nursing home resident COVID-19 prevalence positively correlated with county COVID-19 prevalence rates for both hub and non-hub nursing homes.
- COVID-19 infection rates in nursing homes correlated with staff infection rates; this was consistent with community prevalence.

"We have taken great strides to protect families from the spread of COVID-19 in nursing homes," said MDHHS Director Robert Gordon. "Many of the recommendations from the Nursing Homes COVID-19 Preparedness Task Force and in the CHRT report are already being advanced by the department – strengthening the regional hub model, continuing efforts to test residents and staff and increasing access to PPE, including through a \$25 million grant program for nursing homes and other providers."

"We have taken great strides to protect families from the spread of COVID-19 in nursing homes," said MDHHS Director Robert Gordon. "Many of the recommendations from the Nursing Homes COVID-19 Preparedness Task Force and in the CHRT report represent policies already underway including strengthening the regional hub model, continued efforts to test residents and staff, and a \$25 million grant program for nursing homes and other providers to purchase PPE."

The task force was created by Governor Whitmer's [Executive Order No. 2020-135](#) as an advisory body in the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services to adequately inform the state's response to a potential second wave of COVID-19.

The task force was charged with coordinating across state government and with industry stakeholders to ensure a broad range of input from relevant entities, reporting on best practices to minimize the spread of COVID-19 in nursing homes and provide appropriate and timely technical assistance to nursing homes.

Information around this outbreak is changing rapidly. The latest information is available at Michigan.gov/Coronavirus and CDC.gov/Coronavirus.

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