



National Church Residences

EXCELLENCE THAT TRANSFORMS LIVES

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Governor's Order for COVID-19 Transparency at Senior Living Centers Welcome News

COLUMBUS, Ohio – Gov. Mike DeWine and the Ohio Department of Health's order that senior living centers promptly notify residents and family of any confirmed COVID-19 case among residents and staff members is another important step in our battle against this virus, said leaders from National Church Residences. The order, issued on April 13, requires these facilities to report positive test results within 24 hours.

"Across the nation, the long-term care facilities that serve hundreds of thousands of seniors are experiencing COVID-19 outbreaks," said Michelle Norris, executive vice president for external affairs and growth strategies for National Church Residences. "These people are among our most vulnerable and we commend the governor for ensuring that all such organizations in Ohio practice transparency. It's really this simple - families have a right to know."

National Church Residences, which serves more than 42,000 seniors through an array of housing and health care services in 25 states and Puerto Rico, had already adopted the policy of informing residents and their families of positive tests as soon as possible after the test being confirmed.

For example, Norris said, her organization just this week contacted residents, family and staff about positive-test situations in one of its Central Ohio communities as well as in communities in Michigan and New Jersey.

Listing positive test results by facility on the state website will increase thoughtful transparency, provide families with information they want and enhance efforts to provide the greatest level of safety for residents, staff members and communities, said Norris.

She also noted that, while the test reporting is an important step, other critical steps remain. "We appreciate that the governor and our state's health leaders understand that transparency alone will do nothing to bend the curve," said Norris. Critical to achieving that goal, she said, are increasing access to reliable tests that can be processed quickly and supplying all healthcare workers with an adequate supply of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

"We are proud to be part of a new initiative with several of our industry colleagues and state partners that will address the critical need to do wide-spread rapid testing of at-risk residents and staff in the central Ohio area," said Norris. The Post-Acute Regional Rapid Testing (PARRT) program is launching soon in partnership with Central Ohio Geriatrics, LeadingAge Ohio and Ohio Living and in cooperation with the Ohio Department of Health, Franklin County Health Department and Columbus Health Department.

Norris said that she and her colleagues also wanted to echo the sentiments of Dr. Amy Acton, Ohio's state health director, who said facilities identified with positive tests should not then also carry a stigma. "This isn't a blame game," Acton said. "We've really got to get away from that. This is a 'how do we help' game."



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Indeed, Norris said, facilities that adopt more aggressive testing practices are likely more prone to reporting more positive tests -- a situation that could cause concern among families, but actually will allow facilities to better protect their other residents with interventions such as contact tracing, self-quarantining and assigning residents to separate parts of a building based on their test status.

“For weeks we’ve been implementing increased levels of precautionary measures, including visitor restrictions, routine screenings, intensified sanitation cleanings and heightened use of PPE,” said Norris. “We’ve not only been diligent about complying with guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), but often have exceeded these requirements.”

“We completely understand our families’ concerns about their loved ones’ exposure,” continued Norris. “But, in fact, we are trained and equipped to handle infection, more so than is possible for a family member at home.”

She added that it’s on those front lines that more heroes are emerging. “Like the brave doctors and nurses at hospitals and emergency responders, our staff members are showing up every day, knowing they’re putting themselves and their families at higher risk, to provide care for people they also consider family,” said Norris. “We can’t thank them enough and we can’t work too hard to give them and the residents they serve all the protection possible.”

About National Church Residences

National Church Residences serves more than 42,000 seniors through its array of housing and health care services. The not-for-profit organization is driven by a vision of advancing better living for all seniors, enabling them to remain home for life. With 340 communities in 25 states and Puerto Rico, it is the nation’s largest not-for-profit provider of affordable senior housing and the largest manager of service coordinators. The organization also offers residential senior communities, home and community-based services, as well as permanent supportive housing for the formerly homeless and disabled. For more information, visit us at NationalChurchResidences.org and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [YouTube](#).