

“An Ounce of Prevention is Worth a Pound of Cure”

Benjamin Franklin

As we stand at the threshold of the cold and flu season, there are typical steps that assisted living communities would take in order to prepare. Bearing in mind the COVID-19 pandemic and the challenges it is certain to present, assisted living communities are stepping up their usual preparations and dealing with the crisis proactively. Below are some suggestions for steps that assisted living communities might take as they prepare for an outbreak of illness, as well as the impact of inclement weather in the form of snowstorms and blizzards. These steps are expected to be enhanced in terms of volume and type of supplies needed as well as the anticipated start time for implementing these measures in the presence of COVID-19.

- Stock up on foods that might be needed in the event of a stomach bug/Norovirus outbreak (e.g. broths and soup ingredients, Jell-O, throat lozenges, ice pops, ginger ale/clear liquids, etc.)
- Take inventory of supplies and purchase items that would enable communities to care for staff who may have to spend extended time in the ALR (e.g. bedding/blankets/sheets/pillows, air mattresses, personal care items such as shampoo, soap, toothbrushes/paste)
- Maintain (and have easily accessible to staff) an up-to-date inventory of available living quarters in the event that some residents may have to be quarantined
- Reach out to community providers such as local hotels, ambulance companies, food purveyors, MassMAP, hospitals, neighboring assisted living communities, and transportation companies in an effort to assess their ability and willingness to provide additional supportive services in the event of a crisis
- Increase and enhance training of staff in universal precautions, infection control measures, proper use of personal protective equipment, and sensitivity issues regarding dealing with anxious residents and their families. This includes training of housekeeping staff in proper sanitation procedures of all surfaces throughout the community. It also includes training staff on emergency response in the event of power outages, severe weather, fire, and carbon monoxide dangers
- Remind staff (and assist, if necessary) about the need to establish a contingency plan for home in the event they would have to remain at work for an extended period of time. Issues to consider are childcare (consider the possibility of school closure, also), pet care, care for an ill or aging family member, home maintenance (e.g. snow removal, safety measures, stocking up on supplies at home)
- Order sufficient PPE (personal protective equipment) to address needs of staff and residents in the event of a communicable disease outbreak
- Order sufficient housekeeping supplies in order to sanitize all surfaces repeatedly for an extended period of time

Mass-ALA will continue to offer support, advocacy, and education as we all prepare for the challenges that may lie ahead. Our Annual Conference on September 30th and October 1st will address issues that we've dealt with during the pandemic and will offer suggestions on how we may meet the demands of a difficult season, specifically during outbreaks of communicable disease. Please feel free to reach out to

me at lcashman@mass-ala.org with any thoughts or suggestions on how we might better meet your current and future training and education needs. In that regard, please log onto the Mass-ALA website to complete the brief survey regarding your anticipated training needs. As a follow-up to our 2019 Needs Assessment, we are reaching out to ALRs to determine which topics are highest on the priority list, recognizing that needs may have changed as a result of the pandemic. Your assistance in that endeavor will be helpful as we plan our 2021 education calendar.

Warmest regards,

Laurie