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A DIVISION OF
HEALTH CARE
SERVICES AGENCY

Date: July 20, 2020

To: Skilled Nursing Facilities and Hospitals in San Joaquin County

From: Maggie Park, M.D. Health Officer

Subject: Change in SNF Closing; COVID-19 Testing for Patient Transfers to SNFs

This memo covers two topics of significance to both Skilled Nursing Facilities (SNF) and hospitals in San Joaquin County.

Changes in SNF closing to new admissions during COVID-19 outbreaks:

For most communicable disease outbreaks in Skilled Nursing Facilities (SNF) it is recommended that the SNF closes for new admissions until the outbreak is over. Up until now San Joaquin County Public Health Services (SJCPHS) has made this recommendation when they have cases of COVID-19. We are changing that recommendation now for the following reasons.

With the upsurge in cases of COVID-19 in San Joaquin County the hospitals are reaching their limit. It is essential that they be able to discharge patients as soon as possible to handle the surge in new hospital admissions, this includes patients who are going to a SNF.

According to AFL 20-33.2 to ensure hospital capacity to meet demand for patients requiring acute care, patients with COVID-19 can be discharged to a SNF when clinically indicated. All SNFs are required to have a plan designating dedicated locations within the facility to separate COVID-19 infected patients and for accepting returning residents and new admissions who are either known to be infected with COVID-19 or who need to be in observation for 14 days to rule out COVID-19.

Therefore we are no longer requiring SNFs to close during the investigation and control of COVID-19 in staff or residents. SNFs should continue to accept new and returning residents. The exception to this is, on a case by case basis, if a SNF has a large outbreak of COVID-19 then SJCPHS may recommend they not accept new residents during the initial phases of the outbreak investigation and control efforts.

Hospitals to perform COVID-19 testing for SNF transfers:

SJCPHS is asking that all hospitals in San Joaquin County collect a specimen for a COVID-19 test on all patients who are not known to be COVID-19 positive prior to transferring the patient to a SNF. The test result does not need to be back prior to the patient transfer, but the hospital must ensure that the SNF gets the result when it is available. This will help facilitate the transfer of the patient and will allow the hospital to promptly initiate a contact and source investigation should the test come back positive.

If you have any questions please call SJCPHS at (209) 468-3822.