



JOINT NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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COVID-19 Illness Cluster Identified at Benton Harbor Long Term Care Facility

(Berrien County, Michigan) – The Berrien County Health Department and Spectrum Health Lakeland are working to investigate a cluster of COVID-19 illness at Hallmark Living Benton Harbor, a skilled nursing facility in Benton Harbor, Michigan. To date, 4 employees and 4 residents have tested positive for COVID-19. Three of the residents who tested positive and had been terminally ill prior to COVID-19 diagnosis have died.

The employees who have tested positive for COVID-19 are isolating at home and are no longer having contact with any of the facility residents. The facility residents who have tested positive for COVID-19 are being isolated in their rooms and all group activities have been canceled at this time. All residents and employees are being monitored for COVID-19 symptoms.

The Hallmark Living Center has been working closely with the Berrien County Health Department to ensure residents and staff are safe by following Centers for Disease Control (CDC) Guidelines. Berrien County Health Department will continue to monitor this group of positive cases, as well as provide needed personal protective equipment and infection control guidance needed by the facility.

The Hallmark Living Center is implementing all recommended outbreak mitigation strategies to protect their residents and employees from COVID-19:

- Taking temperatures on all residents and staff twice a day.
- Shutting down all communal spaces and residents are quarantined to their rooms.
- Prohibiting all visitors to the facility.
- Enhancing hand hygiene and use of personal protective equipment for staff.
- Enhanced cleaning and disinfection of the facility.

Nicki Britten, Health Officer at the Berrien County Health Department says, "We have known that COVID-19 is present in our community, but this cluster of illnesses and loss of life at a facility serving some of our most vulnerable in our population is a sobering



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reminder that our community must continue to be vigilant with our actions to keep this virus from spreading. In addition to continuing mitigation strategies in the community, our department will continue to address the needs of our vulnerable populations, including those who live in congregate settings like long-term care facilities.”

The Berrien County Health Department and Spectrum Health Lakeland continue to provide personal protective equipment supplementary support, staff education, and infection prevention technical assistance to long term care facilities and nursing homes across the county to ensure that these high-risk settings have what they need to adequately prevent and mitigate any potential clusters of COVID-19, as well as other illness.

To date, there have been 105 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Berrien County and five deaths due to the virus. BCHD continues to perform contact tracing for all identified COVID-19 positive individuals in Berrien County, resulting in over 1500 contacts made at this time. For updated information regarding COVID-19 in Berrien County, visit www.bchdmi.org/COVID19 or www.spectrumhealthlakeland.org/covid19.

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