

Question and Answers 3/23/2020

Disclaimer: Information changes so rapidly (often by the hour) that the answers are subject to change. Information referenced to other sources cannot be taken as completely factual as the information changes often, and as such in this situation Cedarbrook will not represent complete accuracy of it. We are doing our best to stay current with what is being reported to do what is best for staff and residents.

Q: Why do we not give out masks to every employee every shift?

A: Cedarbrook currently has enough masks to meet CDC guidelines for treating positive COVID-19 cases and other clinical situations that warrant it. The United States of America supply chain for all manners of PPE is depleted, forcing some hospitals to make their own masksⁱ and the CDC to approve scarves as well.ⁱⁱ This is a national issue and has forced a local hospital system to ask for donations of PPEs.ⁱⁱⁱ Much of this PPE is made overseas and those manufacturers have been offline for months, and countries of origin for this PPE have kept it for their own populations. If we provided masks to all staff every shift, masks supply would be depleted rather quickly at that abnormal rate of consumption of masks and there would be a high likelihood of not having masks for treating sick residents when the clinical situation does warrant it.

Q: What have you done to look for masks?

A: The County procurement department continues to work vigorously to attempt to locate supplies. Cedarbrook has repeatedly appealed to state DOH / HAP, who has none to give, because secondarily to the manufacturing issue it is being reported by news outlets that the national stock is dwindling. Cedarbrook ordered 2,000 reusable masks that just went into production via a national vendor and are several weeks out. Price gouging is rampant in the market^{iv}, but Cedarbrook has approved the purchases of masks many times more expensive than typical. It is so bad that since Sunday two nursing facilities have asked Cedarbrook for extra mask because they have none, which we of course had to deny.

Q: Do we have a quarantine area for sick residents?

A: Weeks ago we initiated a plan to utilize the Education Services classroom at the bottom of A-Wing. That area is just about ready to go. While N-95 masks are no longer required by CDC due to mask shortages, Cedarbrook does have a supply of N95s and a fit testing kit to utilize for that area. While that supply is better than most, it is not limitless and we will adjust plans as we see fit. This plan, like all plans, are subject to change based on new updates and guidance.

Q: Can staff use their own masks?

A: Yes, you can. Again, if a clinical situation warrants mask usage for specific residents, we will still provide that mask despite you having your own. If you wear your own masks, we may ask you about your health status to ensure the mask is not to cover an active sickness for that employee.

Q: Why do we temp employees and ask screening questions at the sign-in sheet?

A: It is required by DOH (state guidance issued last week) and is our best way to attempt to keep the virus out of the resident and staff populations.

Q: I saw that a staff member tested positive. Will more staff members test positive?

A: This is impossible to answer, but it appears that experts are increasingly predicting a significant chunk of the population, for example 40-70% indicated by a Harvard epidemiologist, will be infected by COVID-19 at some point.^v This is in line with reports from some state health departments around the country. That is why the visitation ban exists and the staff screening exists to try to keep it out. Experts indicate that “flattening the curve” means that rather than the entire population getting it at once, the amount of infections will be spread across a greater period of time to keep pressure off the healthcare system.^{vi}

Q: When did Cedarbrook find out about the dining services employee?

A: Cedarbrook found out about this employee at approximately 3:45 pm on Friday 3/20/2020 and worked on it the rest of the evening, complementing what DOH had already done. Information was communicated to the floors before 2nd shift left.

Q: Why do we still take admissions?

A: CMS and DOH guidance is that we MUST take admissions (unless we have it rampant in our resident population) because the fear is that the hospital systems will quickly become totally overwhelmed, as is the case currently in NYC.

Q: Will we run out of disinfectant spray and sanitizer?

A: Again, that is impossible to answer and the current answer like all answers are subject to change. Currently, we are relatively comfortable (in these time periods that are not normal) with disinfectant spray and sanitizer supplies.

Q: Why are so many supplies locked up?

A: In a national crisis, we need to do what is necessary to secure our own stock so that it is not compromised. Compromised stock happened in many healthcare facilities and we do not want it happening here.

Q: Do we use the appropriate products for disinfecting?

A: Our Medline product is listed on the EPA approved COVID-19 list.

Q: Who is essential and who is non-essential?

A: All are essential staff at Cedarbrook.

Q: Why is the Sheriff's office here?

A: The deputies are NOT here to quarantine staff. That is a terrible rumor. In uncertain times we feel much better with more of a security presence. And the Sheriff's office has the capacity to share deputies during the week during the shutdown of various County buildings. We are appreciative of the Sheriff.

Q: When will the pandemic end?

A: We wish we knew.

Q: Will I be stopped on my way to or from work by authorities?

A: Potentially, and we have provided a letter for you to present to authorities. Please see your department head if you do not have that letter yet.

Citations pulled 3/23/2020 – we cannot warrant the accuracy of the information in the citations, but wanted to give you the assurances that our information we base decisions on does not come from a vacuum.

ⁱ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-usa-masks/faced-with-a-shortage-of-face-masks-some-u-s-doctors-make-their-own-idUSKBN2170AV>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.cnn.com/2020/03/19/health/hospital-coronavirus-shortages-preparedness/index.html>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.lehighvalleylive.com/coronavirus/2020/03/lehigh-valley-hospitals-calling-for-supply-donations-from-patients-employees.html>

^{iv} <https://www.ny1.com/nyc/all-boroughs/news/2020/03/22/cuomo-press-conference-3-22-2020>

^v <https://theweek.com/speedreads/897799/harvard-scientist-predicts-coronavirus-infect-70-percent-humanity>

^{vi} <https://www.livescience.com/coronavirus-flatten-the-curve.html>

COUNTY OF LEHIGH

Cedarbrook Senior Care and Rehabilitation

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TO: County Executive Phillips Armstrong
FROM: Cedarbrook Director Jason Cumello *Jason Cumello*
DATE: March 24, 2020
RE: Temporary Hazard Pay flat rate increase

Cedarbrook Senior Care and Rehabilitation is seeking a temporary \$5/hr. flat rate additional pay for hours worked for all staff – union and nonunion, all classifications and grades – for this pay period 03/21/2020 – 4/3/2020 and the next pay period 4/4/2020 - 4/17/2020. By 4/15/2020 we will collaborate to determine if the increase can terminate or be extended, pending future conditions that are currently unknown. The flat rate is applicable to total hours worked per pay period for hourly employees and a maximum of 80 hours per pay period worked for salaried employees and does not apply to vacation, sick, reward, personal or holiday pay. This rate increase is intended to solidify nursing home staffing levels during the crisis and reward employees who are working in rapidly changing conditions during the worldwide pandemic that is affecting Lehigh County. The magnitude of this request is quite large, and it was only after careful consideration of the unique situation that has no precedent in modern times of deteriorating COVID-19 conditions in the nation and specifically in Lehigh County that this request is being made.

Please indicate your approval below.

Approved *[initials]*

Denied

Phillips M. Armstrong
County Executive Phillips Armstrong

3/24/20
Date