



Press Release

Macon County Public Health Identifies COVID-19 Outbreak

Macon County Public Health has identified a COVID-19 outbreak at Eckerd Living Center. One staff member and five residents have tested positive for COVID-19. All are well and isolated from others. Both facilities have been following the highest levels of Personal Protective Equipment standards while in their facility and especially when working with patients.

All the residents and staff of Eckerd Living Center have been notified of their exposure and will be tested for COVID-19 at the direction MCPH's Medical Director and the facility's leadership team. Plans are in place to isolate any other individuals, should there be a positive result. Eckerd Living Center and Macon County Public Health have been working together and have verified that both facilities have all the necessary PPE, sanitizing, and monitoring supplies and guidance they need to assure that any spread is minimal.

Eckerd Living Center will be closed to visitors to slow the risk of spread within the facility and to the community. All residents and staff of the facility have been tested and are awaiting results. All residents and staff will be tested every week until there are two consecutive weeks of all negative results. When two consecutive weeks of negative results for all come back, then the facility can begin to allow minimal visitation again.

In addition to staff and residents, MCPH is working to identify any additional close contacts of these individuals. The CDC defines close contact as being within approximately 6 feet of a person with an infection with COVID-19 case for a prolonged period of time of 15 minutes or longer. Based on information provided by the individual, county health officials will assess risks of exposure, determine which if any additional measures are needed such as temperature and symptom checks, quarantine and/or testing.

The entire state of North Carolina is under a "Safer at Home" executive order, currently under phase three with masks required to be worn when social distancing cannot be maintained. Older adults and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions might be at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19; however, anyone of any age can become infected with this illness. Therefore, we ask that community members **strictly follow** the governor's orders and continue to practice **social distancing**, as well as safe hygiene measures such as hand washing and frequently cleaning touched objects and surfaces. The public can monitor the different phases of re-opening and learn more about the restrictions at <https://covid19.ncdhhs.gov/guidance>.

Symptoms for COVID-19 are fever, cough, other lower respiratory illness (shortness of breath). If you believe that you may have COVID-19, please call the Health Department at 828-349-2517. The call center is open Monday through Friday from 8:30am – 4:00pm, closing daily for lunch from 12:00pm – 1:00pm, until further notice.

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