Monday, March 16, 2020

Gov. Kemp, Georgia Health Care Association Issue Joint Statement

Atlanta, GA – Today Governor Brian P. Kemp and the Georgia Health Care Association for Long Term Care, issued the following joint statement regarding measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in skilled nursing facilities, assisted living communities, and personal care homes, after the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) issued new guidance:

“Following the recommendations of federal and state public health officials, and in light of data revealing a high mortality rate among the elderly and chronically ill with COVID-19, we are urging long-term care facilities in the State of Georgia to restrict all visitors, volunteers, and non-essential personnel except for certain compassionate care situations, such as end-of-life situations, to protect their residents from the potential spread of the virus. These facilities should make every effort to provide alternative means of communication for family members and residents while visitation is restricted.

"We also encourage healthcare providers to avoid all group activities and communal dining; continue active screening of residents and health care personnel for respiratory symptoms, including actively checking for a fever; identify staff that work at multiple facilities and actively screen and restrict them appropriately; and
enforce sick leave policies for ill health care personnel that are non-punitive, flexible, and consistent with public health policies allowing personnel who are sick to stay home.

"The World Health Organization estimates a 21.9% mortality rate for those over eighty who are infected with COVID-19, and there is a significant risk that individuals who seem healthy could visit a facility and unintentionally endanger residents. As such, it is critical that we take these precautions to protect the frail and elderly. We ask all members of the public who have loved ones residing in a long-term care facility to remain patient. A temporary restriction on visitation is critical in the fight to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and ensure the health and safety of our state’s most vulnerable citizens.”

To find more information about how to keep your local facility safe, please visit the American Health Care Association website. To read more about CMS guidelines, click HERE.