

Skilled Nursing Facilities Provide Patient, Family Comfort in Difficult Times

As reported by [Council on Aging of Southwest Ohio](#) and other agencies across the Greater Cincinnati region, the coronavirus or COVID-19 has been especially difficult for the most vulnerable members of our community - which often includes seniors and those in need of physical rehabilitation.

Skilled nursing facilities, sometimes referred to as nursing homes, provide comfort to thousands of community members who need ongoing care. They also serve as reassurance and support to nursing home caregivers who continue to care for these vulnerable patients and their loved ones.

Skilled nursing facilities (SNFs) strive to work toward a common goal of positive patient outcomes, developing cohesive and custom treatment plans and partnering with patients in accomplishing therapy goals in a positive and consistent manner.

[Carespring](#) is an example of skilled nursing and rehabilitation facilities serving the Cincinnati, Dayton, and Northern Kentucky areas providing care for seniors and those in need of rehabilitation services. Like other SNFs across the region, they employ experienced teams of licensed therapists educated in cutting-edge, professional care that engages patients on a personal level.

Snapshot: Carespring at the front lines

Amid the earlier days of the local coronavirus outbreak response, The Health Collaborative's member Carespring received confirmation from a Northern Kentucky hospital that a Carespring patient had tested positive for COVID-19. The evening prior, a team member had also tested positive, triggering immediate intervention from local and state health departments.

Praise has been strong for the team's infection control plan and the facilities' implementation of the mountains of guidance received. Even Federal agencies are noticing – a recent [CMS](#) Infection Focus Survey has brought acclaim to the work being done in these local SNFs. All agencies have verified that we implemented and operationalized all guidance when it was distributed by governing agencies

Important to note is that nursing home patients are being protected following [CDC](#), [CMS](#), and [state](#) health department guidance. This virus is highly infectious and difficult to detect. It has been [reported](#) that 25-50% of people infected are asymptomatic, which is why social distancing has proven so important.

In the healthcare world, social distancing is difficult to achieve while providing direct patient care. Carespring and many of its peers proactively implemented facility-wide usage of personal protective equipment (PPE) early in the pandemic, including masks for all team members, citing CDC insight that healthcare workers wearing this PPE are at low to no-risk for contracting the virus.

CARESPRING PLAYBOOK:

Snapshot of a SNF During a Pandemic

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Preparing for a Pandemic

- Restrict visitors and non-essential vendors in all locations
- Deploy iPads and technology to assure that patients stay connected with loved ones
- Deploy a **Personal Protective Equipment** Task Force whose sole responsibility is to secure the necessary PPE to care safely for patients
- Research the best disinfecting agents and ensure facility teams have appropriate cleaning products to sanitize all areas
- Initiate a \$2-per-hour **wage increase** to reward team members for working during this pandemic
- Initiate screenings including temperature checks and vital questions for all visitors and new patients
- Initiate a rigorous **disinfecting schedule**
- Limit group activities such as physical therapy and dining to only those where **social distancing** can be maintained; some residents begin dining in their rooms

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Strengthening Safeguards

- Implement **facility-wide usage** of personal protective equipment including masks by all team members
- Healthcare workers in close patient contact are given gloves and protective eye equipment
- Implement a ONE CALL message system to be able to **communicate updates** to families

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Social Isolation

- **Discontinue all group activities** and communal dining in all buildings and locations

Proactive and prepared

Carespring and peer facilities continue to screen patients multiple times daily for signs and symptoms of COVID-19, including changes in temperature, blood pressure, and oxygen levels. However, despite the vast precautions that all healthcare providers and community members are employing, COVID-19 cases will be inevitable and we must all remain vigilant in following social distancing guidelines.

In order to keep vulnerable populations safe, [best practices](#) have proven that broad COVID-19 testing is necessary before sending patients to community healthcare centers in order to prevent the spread of the virus. These centers are home to their patients, and caregivers are diligently following infection control processes to keep them as safe and healthy as possible. Funding for preadmission testing is being sought region-wide and we all need our communities to continue to practice social distancing and follow stay-at-home orders. The most vulnerable among us are depending on it.