July 9, 2020

MEMO RE: SUSPENSION OF PUBLIC HEALTH APPROVAL FOR HOSPITAL-SNF/LTCF DISCHARGES

The Department of Public Health is monitoring with concern the sharp recent increase in hospitalizations and ICU utilization for COVID-19+ patients.

In an effort to enable hospitals to decompress as part of countywide surge plans, the Department of Public Health will temporarily suspend the discharge approval requirement to skilled nursing facilities (SNFs) and long term care facilities (LTCFs) until further notice. Instead of requiring a call between the hospital, the SNF/LTCF and a Public Health department staff member, hospitals may directly contact a facility for patients they believe appropriate for discharge as they would ordinarily do for other such discharges.

This temporary suspension does not obligate SNFs or LTCFs to accept patients and a SNF or LTCF may refuse an admission they believe inappropriate or unsuitable. Facility admission policies should still be implemented according to the best current guidelines from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services and the California Department of Public Health, as well as any applicable state and local orders, regulations and All-Facilities Letters.

Hospitals discharging patients inappropriately and/or SNFs or LTCFs accepting them inappropriately will be held responsible for any attributable exposures that result.

All facilities currently closed to admits due to a COVID-19 outbreak under investigation shall remain closed to accepting additional patients until cleared by Public Health.

The Department of Public Health will consider reinstitution of the discharge approval requirement as hospital conditions improve.

Attentively,

Cameron Kaiser, MD, MPH, FAAFP
Public Health Officer
County of Riverside