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## 05/13/20 Governor's Press Conference on Longterm Care Facilities & COVID-19

### Governor DeSantis

- Looking at outliers of spikes in cases outside of SE Florida, they are usually due to Prisons, Nursing Homes, data dumps (with delayed data), or new testing facilities
- Nursing Homes are our priority
  - Florida has 4400 long term care facilities, 150,000 residents, 200,000 staff
  - Main focus is avoid introducing disease
    - Prohibited visitors
    - Prohibited sending COVID positive residents back to long term care facilities.
    - Places in NE had laws requiring them to accept COVID patients at LTCs
- Long-term Care Facility Cases FL per 100,000: 14.9
  - Much lower compared to other states. (CO- 49.9, IL- 59.6, LA- 76.4, PA- 93.7, CT- 153.6, MA- 213.0, NJ- 280.0 - Not all states report.)
- FL Long-term Care Facility Fatality Rate per 100,000: 2.0
  - Much lower compared to other states. (CO- 6.8, IL- 8.5, LA- 15.9, PA- 18.4, NY- 26.8, CT- 35, MA- 38.5, NJ- 51.3 - Not all states report.)
- State Actions:
  - DOH and ACHA - conducted 1000s of onsite visits for needs assessments, infection controls, identifying vulnerabilities, EMS assessment teams
  - Worked in conjunction with CDC
  - Mandated screening of staff early-on - temperature checks
    - temp checks not fool proof because of asymptomatic
  - Mandated universal face masks
  - Directed DEM to provide PPE to all 698 nursing homes and 3,101 ALFs
    - To date: 10 million masks, 1 million gloves, .5 million faceshields, 160,000 gowns
  - Emergency Rule mandating hospitals to test for COVID prior to discharge even if in hospital for unrelated reasons
  - Established transfer protocols
  - FL established COVID nursing homes
    - The reasons other states forced nursing homes to accept COVID patients is because nursing home patients may not require hospitalization or prolonged hospitalization-
    - COVID nursing homes allows for proper isolation, ventilation, and allow residents to continue to have access to a comfortable bed with proper long-term care
    - Dolphin Point in Jacksonville and 3 additional sites active with one more opening this weeks

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- Regional approach- Miami-Dade will have facility. Having regional access only way to get to sustainable point
- Facilities infection control- masks are important. staff is the most major vector, some have done outstanding and some have not- problem is they are not sick they have no fever and no symptoms (even some of the elderly population was asymptomatic)
- DOH doing surveillance testing to identify a spike using representative samples
- Gave flexibility to frontline providers:
  - Approved a program to allow personal care attendants to temporarily perform additional duties. Important bc if staff member tests positive may become shorthanded.
  - Gave additional time for nursing facilities and to meet intermediate care facilities to pay quality assessment fees.
  - Advocated for CMS waiver to allow swing beds with greater flexibility
  - Expanded medicaid coverage for telemedicine services to allow physicians to treat patients remotely
  - Addressed negative financial incentives to keep residents in nursing homes by allowing nursing facilities to be reimbursed if patient not in Medicaid certified bed, relaxing Medicaid occupancy and nursing facilities, and advocated to CMS for raising reimbursement for hospitals keep nursing home patients
- EMS sentinel surveillance testing- EMS ambulance performed testing in 5 facilities, 12 EMS units have visited 25 facilities so far. 300 tests completed. Surveillance will continue local, state and Federal. This is most important because focuses on entry points that are most
- Rapid Emergency Support Teams (REST)- infection preventionists, RNs, Florida Infection Disease Transportation Network Team (FIDTN), and EMS
  - Deployed to over 200 LTCs to ensure patient safety
- 15 VA teams providing infection control and augment staff
  - 37 LTC facilities, serving 4200 patients (US DVA responded)
- Deployed 50 mobile testing teams with Florida National Guard and DOH
  - Tested 32,000 residents and staff, identified clusters
- Mobile testing lab for rapid 45 min tests
  - 3500 tests per week
  - First of its Kind
  - an extra day or two makes a huge difference in isolating
  - Cepheid helped retrofit RV - uses similar tech for HIV in Africa
- Moving forward will continue to do major things: testing, PPE, screen employees, etc.
- Prison is self-contained and a lower risk demographic than nursing homes so nursing homes are the biggest priority
- Two months without visitors at facilities-

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- Helped avoid more fatalities but isolation has psychological and social costs
- I want to get to yes on that I just want to get to a place to ensure that if someone visits their mother we won't have 50 infections
- We must give hope that people can see their family again, we have a responsibility to try.
- Hope hospitals will be self sufficient on PPE as supply chain grows, DEM will stay in the fight for LTCs
- Goal is to set up self-sustaining local ecosystems with LTCs, hospitals and local communities
- Reason is because 85 years or older represents 5% of document infections but 32% fatalities, 75 and up 62% of fatalities, 65 and up 84% fatalities, under 25 yrs zero deaths

### **ACHA Secretary Mayhew:**

- Laser beam focus on medically frail
- Has been heartbreaking work
- Knew early on that risk of rapid transmission was greatest in LTCs
- Knew standard of prevention N95 masks, negative pressure rooms have never been expected within our nursing homes
  - Important we did not have false expectations of them and to reinforce them
- ACHA and DOH remarkable level of engagement with each other and LTCs
- Government is usually rigid and doesn't respond well to flexibility. Grateful for Governor's leadership to provide and seek flexibility with CMS.
- Hospitals must be our core partner regionally
- Grateful for the more than 200,000 frontline workers and caregivers around the state that are helping people eat, bathe, go to restroom

### **Surgeon General Rivkees**

- Educating workers and facilities
- Screening employees
- Restricting visitors
- Infection Control
- Evaluating ill patients
- Isolating infected and getting them care
- In February: began screening staff and visitors, began series of call with LTCs
- March: established emergency call center for COVID19 concerns in LTCs, strike teams visited more than 4000 facilities, initial surveillance study, required masks for asymptomatic and pre-symptomatic spread
- April: Increased PPE distribution, increased testing- more than 32,000 residents and staff tested, mobile testing lab
- Worked with FL Health Care Association with webinars for staff on sustainable infection control

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## **Steve Bahmer, President & CEO of Leading Age Florida**

- 500 providers in continuum of care - low income housing, affordable housing for low-income seniors, assisted living nursing homes, and care in retirement communities
- Thank the Governor for making priority from the start. Started in January to take steps to prepare.
- We've partnered with DOH and ACHA on a daily basis throughout the last several weeks
- Thank you to Gov for
  - Limitation of visitors (very difficult and we have begun conversations on how we can allow)
  - Requiring hospitals to tests prior to discharging
  - Expansion of testing- visits from DOH, National Guard,
  - VA teams have also been very helpful
- Thank you to Dir Moskowitz at DEM - outstanding job in procuring and supplying PPE- which will need to continue I'm afraid
- Want to follow up on Gov's comments on visitation- families have been torn apart
  - We've deployed technology, internal television networks, balcony bingo, everything to combat the effects of social isolation
- Look to the Future- continue to focus on PPE, continue to expand testing and repeated testing, regional partnerships with hospitals (transfers PPE)

## **Governor DeSantis**

- We have tests available beyond capacity than National Guard can deliver - if a Long-term care facility is able to conduct tests, we can send you the supplies, we can FedEx everything, we have the contract with the lab already and that could be a force multiplier for the state in testing.
- To nursing home staff: we have 13 drive-thru tests across the state, have walk-up sites and sites through other healthcare partners. We are using about half the capacity at these sites. Can do twice as many. Facilities should be requiring employees to get tested every so often. Also avail yourselves of mobile labs and regular health care.
- We will continue to see new innovation and technology:
  - Antigen point-of-care test coming online soon- good if test if positive. not always if negative, some false negatives.
  - Also looking into home tests that can be done at home and sent in

## **Emmett Reed, Florida Health Care Association**

- Thank you to Gov and heroic caregivers in LTCs on ground zero
- Governor has made some very tough decisions- requiring hospitals to keep COVID positive patients saved thousands of lives and you got a lot of heat for it
- Strong partnership with DEM, DOH, ACHA

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- Working on partnership between hospitals and nursing homes- communicate, share resources on infection control and continuing education, it's starting to work
- We want to things to get back to normal, families the residents do to, but it is resident safety first
- Put together a Task Force- clinicians, ALFs, infection control experts, nursing home administrators for steps moving forward.

### **Governor DeSantis**

- Also just acquired Remdesivir.
  - Have about 100 to 200.
  - We have 250 on ventilators that will probably use that full supply
- Notable decline in hospitalization
  - ICU beds - Our peak was 850-900 now down to 450
  - Seeing hospitalizations are because of the transfers, where a patient may not require hospitalization but they require isolation.
- Appreciate hospitals that have worked on this. Hoping to have more announcements soon from across the state.
- Will continue to see outbreaks in meatpacking facilities, prisons and unfortunately LTCs and it does not take much to introduce to LTC
- We can have a strong economy and protect long term care. Some states shut down the economy and didn't protect long term care. We can pursue both, not just one or the other
- Very important to get families back to loved ones- human beings are not meant to be separated, these are important moments.

### **Q & A:**

#### **Timetable on allowing visitors?**

We don't know. Will solicit input from LTCs. If situation where running risk of outbreak must err on side of caution, so don't want to give false hope by putting timeline.

Have looked at having rapid tests at facilities to test visitors but have so many facilities.

**Testing of residents and staff-** We want all tested. Some residents refuse to be tested. Want every resident who wants test to be able to get test.

Each facility to have a testing regimen even though some are concerned that they will end up short-handed when employees test positive

#### **Other state required all employees tested within next two weeks. Why not FL?**

We've done more than every other state. We have 4400 facilities. We want every staff member to be tested. We can distribute tests. We can accommodate at testing sites

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Staff are screened every day for illness or fever. Surveillance testing is also good innovation

## **Extend moratorium on evictions? Expires 17th**

I think we've done that or will be doing that through at least the end of month but will have announcement soon

## **Are you prepared to let Broward reopen and their beaches?**

I've allowed locals to decide from the beginning on beaches. Thought outrage was overblown and partisan. The Mayor of Fort Lauderdale has a different situation than in St. Augustine. Will continue to let locals decide. The virus prefers indoors, not outdoors. Brevard is fine and has beaches open. Broward and Miami have higher population so have different concerns.

- Broward has been trending well. Miami is beginning to trend well
- Also want to note that we aren't even in a full Phase 1 yet in the other 65 counties: We did 25% instead of 50% capacity in restaurants. We limited gyms, movie theaters, etc.
- Palm Beach opened on Monday. Mayor Gimenez has a good plan. We have been in contact with Mayor and County Administrator in Broward since the beginning. This is going to be local solutions working collaboratively with the state. If Commission approves a plan and its signed off by health folks my view is to work with them.
- One thing i am going to do, probably this week: All professional sports are welcome here for practicing and playing. Maybe not fans.
- Soccer wants to practice in Orlando. Yes. We want baseball, basketball. Important for the country to have this return. Will be charity golf tournament in Juno Beach next week

To Commissioners of Leagues- if you have a team in an area that will not allow to operate we will find a place for you in Florida

## **Prisons- what are you doing to mitigate huge spread?**

Not a huge spread compared to other states. Yesterday there was 100 prisoners in rural county percent positive is higher than state as a whole - in other parts of country 75%

We will expand testing in prisons and you will continue to see increase in cases

Isolations transfers. Prison demographic is not as at-risk. Many are asymptomatic, do not get sick, do not require hospital. Employee spread has been very low - which I did not expect.

## **Thoughts on the new Federal proposal?**

Have not looked at it. It's partisan, its lots of pages and no one has probably read it.

I do not miss Congress. It's frustrating to watch how they operate.

My position on states getting funding is that I don't want FL and TX lose competitive advantage

- don't want states rewarded that didn't do a good job managing finances bail out pensions

Even some companies that are getting PPP are papering over past mistakes and states are the same. Relative fiscal position of states after COVID should reflect positions prior to COVID.