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Tom Tornstrom

Gundersen Tri-State Ambulance

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March 25th, 2020

Long Term Care Facilities Including:

Nursing Homes, Assisted Living Facilities, and Group Homes

Dear Community Partners:

On behalf of Gundersen Tri-State Ambulance and numerous EMS first response agencies, and in conjunction with our medical director, we ask that you work with us regarding the information contained within this letter.

As EMS providers, one of the most important and immediate measures we can take is to limit the potential exposure of ourselves and others to the Coronavirus. To this end, effective immediately, the greater La Crosse Area EMS system will be modifying typical operating procedures pertaining to facilities such as nursing homes, long term care facilities, assisted living facilities, and group homes as follows:

* When a 911 or direct call request for an ambulance is placed for one of your patients, residents, visitors, or staff members, EMS agencies including Tri-State Ambulance and first responder or fire departments (if responding), will be asking for additional information prior to making contact with your resident and entry into your building.
  + When possible, please have a staff member with knowledge of the patient, or who is in direct communication with a caregiver who is knowledgeable, meet the EMS responders at the outside door prior to them entering the building. The responders will be asking the staff member a few questions (in addition to what was asked on the 911 and/or Gundersen phone call). Questions will be related to the patient’s current condition and pertaining to Influenza Like Illness (ILI) symptoms which can be indicative of a higher likelihood for COVID-19 infection.
  + In addition to the patient related questions, please be prepared to answer any questions pertaining to the overall COVID-19 infection rate of your facility.
  + If the patient’s condition is critical and warrants an immediate entry by EMS, responders may don personal protective equipment including N95 masks prior to making entry. This PPE donning process will take additional time and facilities should be aware of the delayed entry.
  + If possible, based upon the patient’s condition, mobility, and circumstances, meeting EMS at the outside door with the patient while remaining inside the building would be greatly appreciated.

These questions and practices will help EMS limit the number of responders making entry and reduce the risk of exposure to the responders, your staff, your residents, and your visitors. We hope we have addressed these changes properly and we appreciate your understanding and cooperation.

Tom Tornstrom

Executive Director