



NEWS

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For Immediate Release

San Mateo County Health Officer Issues Order Barring Visitors from Skilled Nursing Facilities

Redwood City, Calif. – San Mateo County Health Officer Dr. Scott Morrow has issued a legal order barring unauthorized visitors and non-essential personnel from licensed skilled nursing facilities in the county.

These residential care facilities are home to elderly adults and persons with medical needs who are vulnerable to COVID-19. The order bars family members of residents and other visitors from entering the facilities. Essential personnel, including medical care providers and first responders, will continue to have access, and facilities have discretion to grant exceptions for others on a case-by-case basis.

According to the order, “The virus that causes Coronavirus 2019 Disease (also known as COVID-19) places residents at long-term care facilities at high risk, especially given that visitors to such facilities may have the virus but may not have symptoms or may have mild symptoms. Such visitors can easily pass the virus on to vulnerable residents.”

The order restricts unauthorized visitors and non-essential personnel from those facilities until May 9th, unless rescinded by the health officer.

The text of the order is here: <https://bit.ly/3aQFcUG>

With 15 of the 105 positive Bay Area cases of COVID-19 in San Mateo County, Morrow says, “I now have evidence of widespread community transmission of COVID-19 in San Mateo County.”

The skilled nursing facilities order adds new urgency to the health officer’s guidance for everyone to practice social distancing in the county. Morrow adds special emphasis to persons over 60 and those with underlying medical conditions, who should avoid all gatherings to the extent possible. He recommends avoiding mass gatherings, maintaining at least a six-foot distance from others when possible, and working remotely if feasible.

Morrow advises that all non-essential gatherings should be canceled, postponed, or done remotely. Schools, which are essential gatherings, should continue to consult with the San Mateo County Office of Education.

San Mateo County Health continues the following steps to guard against the spread of COVID-19: cover your cough and sneeze, wash your hands frequently, avoid shaking hands and touching your face with unwashed hands, and if you are not feeling well or are experiencing cold, flu, or other symptoms, stay home from school or work. If you are mildly ill, there is no need to contact your primary care provider as they are very busy right now. If you are significantly ill, contact your primary care provider.

For more information, visit smchealth.org/coronavirus. For updates from the San Mateo County Emergency Operations Center, subscribe here: <https://cmo.smcgov.org/eoc>.

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