



**DATE: November 19, 2020**

**STATEMENT: Wesbury Responds to Increase of COVID-19 Cases**

On November 2, 2020, Wesbury conducted weekly mandatory COVID-19 testing, required of skilled nursing facilities when the county positivity rate rises above 5%. Subsequently, staff and then residents began to test positive. Initially, those who tested positive were asymptomatic. Contact tracing was conducted and concluded that the virus entered the community from multiple situations. However, the timing of this test cycle correlates with the sharp rise in the county positivity rate, and several of the positive staff cases were found to be directly linked to separate community exposures. Unfortunately, Coronavirus symptoms can remain undetected until discovered by testing, at which time the positive individual may have been contagious for several days, potentially exposing others before detected and isolated.

#### **Why do the numbers continue to rise?**

To date, Wesbury's Grace Rehabilitation and Health Center has experienced a total of thirty-six (36) positive cases among staff and sixty-nine (69) positive cases among residents. Of these, fifty-two (52) resident cases are active. Sadly, Wesbury is not alone; to date many facilities between Erie and Pittsburgh are experiencing similar outbreaks. In Wesbury's case, tracing results indicate that once the virus entered the building through asymptomatic individuals, it had the opportunity to spread to others before detection. Further tracing shows that this week's additional positive results are not indicative of a new exposure to the facility, rather a residual outcome of the initial exposure, which has been materializing over the past two and a half weeks.

Any individual under the following circumstances can cause undetected spread:

- A person who contracts COVID-19 is considered contagious for at least 48 hours before they start to show symptoms.
- An asymptomatic person who goes undetected can shed the virus at a contagious level for at least 14 days.
- When a person is exposed, it typically takes 3-5 days for symptoms to occur, or for the viral load to be at a detectable level for testing.

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## **What is Wesbury doing to resolve the situation?**

Due to the restrictions put in place at the inception of the pandemic and the limited exposure of the COVID-19 in Crawford County, Wesbury was able to keep the virus out of the facility for over 6 months. In the past three months, Wesbury has been through multiple thorough process reviews that include a Department of Health (DOH) Annual Survey, two Department of Health Infection Control/COVID Surveys, and two COVID-specific surveys conducted by The Regional Response Health Collaboration Program (RRHCP), managed by LECOM. Two of these occurred during Wesbury's initial exposure. For each of these five surveys, Wesbury was found to be 100% deficiently-free with no recommendations. However, throughout this experience, Wesbury has identified opportunities for improvement and has made adjustments to their infection control practices. For example, they have isolated every neighborhood with its own entry and exit points and implemented all emergency protocols to minimize any further crossover potential or spread. Additionally, they continue to work closely with the Department of Health and follow all guidelines as required by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), DOH, and Department of Human Services (DHS).

"At this time of great challenge, the dedication of our staff quickly became apparent. We are blessed to have dedicated staff members that have volunteered to step out of their typical roles to do whatever is needed. While our nursing staff works diligently to care for the positive residents and maintain the care for those unaffected, all other departments have jumped in to help in many inspiring ways that go far beyond their job description," notes Brian Nageotte, President and CEO. "We wish to thank the residents, staff, families, and greater community for the outpouring of support and prayers. We are overwhelmed with gratitude."

