



IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF  
**HEALTH & WELFARE**

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TO: Tamara Prisock, Administrator, Division of Licensing and Certification

FROM: Dr. Christine Hahn, Public Health Medical Director

### **Reducing Risk of Respiratory Illness Clusters and Outbreaks**

We are asking for your help in identifying outbreaks of respiratory disease in Idaho, so we can facilitate timely testing for COVID-19 and influenza. The largest cluster of COVID-19 disease in the United States is associated with a long-term care facility in Washington state. As you are aware, older adults and those with underlying medical conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, and lung disease are at increased risk for severe illness and death from COVID-19 (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/high-risk-complications.html>). Reporting clusters of respiratory illness among patients, residents, and staff in non-acute care and residential facilities is mandatory in Idaho; therefore, your facility is protected under HIPAA regulations.

Please share this message with all skilled nursing and assisted living facilities in Idaho.

**We ask that facilities notify their local public health district as soon as a cluster of respiratory illness is suspected in the facility.** Local public health districts can assist facility staff with actions to limit the spread of disease and protect patients, residents, and staff from illness. Clusters and outbreaks of respiratory illness can be reported to the facility's local public health district (<https://coronavirus.idaho.gov/contact/>) or the Idaho Epidemiology Section with the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare at 208-334-5939. Facilities are protected: Idaho law requires reporting within 1 working day, whether an etiologic agent has been determined or not (<https://adminrules.idaho.gov/rules/current/16/160210.pdf>).