



LEGIONELLA: LESSONS LEARNED

Covenant Living at the Holmstad

Background

Covenant Living at the Holmstad is a faith-based not-for-profit continuum of care retirement community in Batavia that serves over 500 residents in its Residential Living, Assisted Living and Skilled Nursing Center.

End of August 2019, campus received notification from Kane County of several campus residents who had tested positive for Legionnaire's Disease at the local hospital. IDPH was immediately contacted and the three groups initiated a collaborative investigation.

In total, 12 campus residents and 2 individuals from the broader community were diagnosed. The campus cases were largely in residential living in buildings scattered across campus – most impacted residents were active and involved in the broader community.

The last known onset occurred on September 21st, and the active investigation was considered concluded four weeks later with no conclusive common source determined.

Response

Establish water management expert immediately. Take action to procure the significant funds that may be necessary for an effective response.

Consider proactive, aggressive measures to create confidence and limit potential risk while investigation is pending.

Clearly define roles among leadership for ongoing response as determined in your emergency preparedness plan, such as incident command, communications, logistics and operations continuity. Ensure leaders making critical decisions are not fatigued.

Maintain thorough documentation of all remediation efforts and communications with regulatory authorities.

Internal Communication Best Practices

Frequent, transparent communication is vital. Use multiple communication mediums – memos, FAQs, Town Halls, press releases

Expert Panel laid foundation for credibility and displayed unity between campus, water management vendor, medical director and health department

Accessibility of qualified personnel at all hours to respond to inquiries

Consider all possible stakeholder who would want updates – residents, family members, staff members, volunteers, vendors, etc. – and proactively anticipate concerns.

External Communication

Utilize existing or obtain new crisis communications resource to field media inquiries. Remind staff about protocol for media engagement.

Present a united front with local authorities, and loop these partners in on any planned external communication.

Recognize that local government officials will be fielding many questions, and provide with accurate and timely updates.

Set realistic expectations with the public that a definitive source is unlikely to be determined.

Regardless of outcome, consider a long-term reputation management plan to reassure the public.

Proactive Measures

Educate

Educate staff about signs and symptoms of Legionnaires – early identification and treatment improves likelihood of positive health outcomes.

Manage

Create, implement and regularly update a water management plan with an expert resource. Document all actions.

Partner

Look to your county health department as your partner – reach out early and often for support and resources.



QUESTIONS?

Amanda Gosnell
Covenant Living at the Holmstad
ahgosnell@covliving.org
630.879.4008