Department of Health
Three Capitol Hill
Providence, RI 02908-5097
TYY: 711
www.health.ri.gov

April 7, 2020

To: Nursing Home Administrators

RE: Decedent removal and transport from nursing homes

Thank you for all your hard work, understanding, and compassion during this very challenging time. As the COVID-19 surge advances, there are unfortunately many difficult circumstances that we must confront, including those surrounding the removal and transport of those who have passed away in nursing homes.

The current process for removing those who have passed away from nursing homes involves the livery service or funeral home personnel entering the facility and going to the decedent's room. This pandemic poses risks that necessitate changes to the current practice. To reduce the risk of transmission, we need to limit the number of people entering our nursing homes. Experience has shown that ill workers and workers who traveled between buildings likely contributed to nursing home outbreaks.

Effective immediately, the following protocol will be in effect:

- Nursing homes will identify one single location for retrieval for decedents in their building.

- Livery services should be informed by each respective facility to arrive at the pre-designated location to retrieve a decedent. The nursing home must disclose to the livery personnel if the decedent was COVID-19 positive or if

COVID-19 was suspected. If the residence/facility does not have a transport table/gurney, they may request to use the livery service gurney.

- Prior to the arrival of the livery service, the nursing home staff will place the decedent in a body bag.

    - As nursing homes continue to pick up personal protective equipment (PPE) from the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) warehouse, they will also be given a supply of body bags. In order to support the transition to this new protocol, each livery service has also been provided an initial allocation of body bags and gloves and masks.

- Per CDC instructions, once bagged, the body bags of decedents who were COVID-19 positive or suspected to have COVID-19 must be wiped down with an EPA-approved product.

- The nursing home staff will then transport the decedent to the pre-designated location for pick-up by livery personnel. If appropriate, given the physical layout within the nursing home, the facility staff may transport the decedent to the pre-designated location just prior to arrival of the livery.

We understand that this is a significant change in the normal process of handling our deceased. This protocol will be in effect for a limited time. Please understand that we know this is difficult for everyone and appreciate your efforts to support your staff through this time.