Texas State Report, 2020

From Rebecca Japko, VOR State Co-Coordinator for Texas

On May 21, 2020 Texas announced that it would test all residents and staff members at the State Supported Living Centers and State Hospitals for COVID-19.

Limited information has been forthcoming regarding number of infections at each campus. Texas has extreme medical privacy laws that will not allow any information to be provided except below.

COVID-19 Cases at State Supported Living Centers and State Hospitals

This information shows the number of people served in state hospitals and state supported living centers who have tested positive for COVID-19 since March 19. It also includes the number of people served who have recovered from COVID-19 since March 19.
As of June 3, 2020:
• Total population served: 4,667
• Total number of facilities: 23
• Total positive cases among patients and residents: 178
• Current number of facilities with at least one positive patient or resident: 8
• Residents and patients who have recovered: 139
• Resident and patient deaths due to COVID-19-related complications: Fewer than 10

The following information regarding specific campuses has been provided by the county health department in which the State Supported Living Center is located.

Denton Public Health Department has reported that the Denton SSLC has had 126 COVID-19 cases, including 60 residents and 66 employees. The one deceased person was a man in his 60s who had been hospitalized.

Fort Bend County officials reported two COVID-19-related resident deaths at Richmond State Supported Living Center (RSSLC). The number of COVID-19 cases at Richmond SSLC is unknown.

The Lufkin State Supported Living Center has at least three confirmed positive cases of COVID-19.

While there are been outbreaks at some centers, the public and families continue to show their support for the State Supported Living Centers' Volunteer Services Councils (VSC) all over Texas. Here are a few reports:

VSC for the Denton SSLC

Many people have created and donated artistic fabric masks for the staff for their safety and the residents. Donations of funds and goods have been collected to fund the Employee Food Bank. "Heroes Work Here" painted van was parked in front of the entrance; family members are bringing food for the staff and a church held up encouraging signs all this to let staff know their community sees their hard work and perseverance to provide care in these challenging times. All these donations and support have been a huge morale booster to the staff and brings a smile to their faces.

Neil Sperry, radio personality and Texas gardening expert has been named Volunteer of the Year.

Neil Sperry has been an enthusiastic supporter of the Denton SSLC for 40 years. He has long served as an ambassador for the facility, most notably as the driving force behind the annual Christmas is for Caring radiothon that is a huge fundraiser for Denton.

The facility staff said, “No one has a stronger or more recognized voice than the father of Texas gardening, who chose to plant his roots at the Denton State Supported Living Center. We have been lucky to call him a friend of our facility and can think of no one who exemplifies Volunteer/Advocate of the Year better than Neil Sperry.”

VSC of the San Angelo SSLC

Children's Advocacy Center of Greater West Texas, Inc., and Ener-Tel Services donated 6 HUNDERED N 95 masks to the staff. Sewa International USA - Houston for donated hand sanitizer and surgical masks to the San Angelo SSLC. A Special Meal program has been for the residents and staff. Each home has a designated day and food from a restaurant of their choice!

Volunteers from @United We Stand- San Angelo and various church groups, friends of the VSC and family members of SSLC staff who have sewn HUNDREDS of masks for the people at the San Angelo SSLC.

VSC of Richmond SSLC

The VSC has coordinated the donations of meals to staff. While other supporters have made masks and donated Personal Protective Equipment to the Richmond SSLC. VSC of the RSSLC has more than 250 volunteers that are supporting their individuals and staff daily.

Donation drive was conducted at a local McDonald’s. Items received included adult coloring books, art supplies, crossword puzzles, DVD's.

VSC of Lufkin State Supported Living Center

William George Co. INC. donated a freezer truck arrived to save the day while the main kitchen freezer was being repaired.

Many supporters are creating cloth face masks or donating fabric, all these efforts are greatly appreciated.

Front Porch Distillery in Nacogdoches has produced enough hand sanitizer to enable the pharmacy staff at Lufkin SSLC to distribute 300 bottles of hand sanitizer for the nurses and direct support staff.

Friends of the Austin SSLC

The Austin Chinese Community Covid-19-Fighting Alliance has donated over 2,000 masks to Austin SSLC.

Tito's Handmade Vodka donated 48 gallons of hand sanitizer to Austin SSLC. Desert Door Distillery donated their custom-made hand sanitizer.

The Friends group has fashioned 2200 Fabric masks. The Friends are continuing to take donations of fabric. A COVID relief food fund has been established for staff to receive gift cards for food.

To help keep residents engaged, the Friends have purchased arts and craft supplies. Another fund has been set up to cover the lost wages of residents pay due to the closing of their workshops and vocational training. Residents look forward to getting their weekly paycheck.

Brenham SSLC Family Association

Overall, the staff morale is good across the campus. They feel very supported.

The family association and individual family members and guardians have communicated with staff with large signs of support and have communicated words of thanks for all their work with their family members who live on the homes.

Our District State Senator communicates with the center and has promised to help if needed.

Over three thousand dollars in donations have been received for the employee food pantry and other donations of food and gifts have been received on the individual units.

Pictures of staff on individual units have been posted on FB with family members sharing and commenting words of thanks to the individual units pictured.

The state is providing up to 160 hours of paid sick leave for those employees who are ill with the virus or are caring for a family member who has it.

Volunteer Services Council is able to provide birthday parties and celebrations for clients. Shopping trips are still being done, but by staff members shopping from a list. Purchases are then brough back to the units.