



Parliamentary Statement: COVID-19 & Residential Facilities
Delivered by Dr. the Hon. Christopher Tufton, MP
Minister of Health & Wellness
Tuesday, November 3, 2020; 2:00 p.m.

Madam Speaker, I rise to update this honourable house and the people of Jamaica, on the recent developments surrounding COVID-19 and its impact on residential institutions, namely nursing homes, infirmaries and prisons, which house some of the vulnerable members of our society.

Madam Speaker, as early as January 2020, the public health team began to develop protocols that would help to delay the entry of the virus into the country, contain its spread and slow the transmission among the population. To date, the team has developed some 50 protocols to govern this public health challenge.

Chief on our radar, Madam Speaker, would be the protection of the vulnerable members of the society, which includes our seniors, many of whom are in facility care run by the state and private interests. To this end, the public health team has included as part of its routine surveillance, the inspection of nursing homes, prisons and infirmaries.



Madam speaker, as the country may be aware, recently three such facilities, through our routine surveillance had been found to have had COVID-19 cases.

Golden Age Home

Madam Speaker, emergency management protocols had to be triggered at the Golden Age Home in St. Andrew, after an investigation, involving contact tracing, testing and inspection by the public health team, a cluster of cases was uncovered.

Madam Speaker, of the 620 residents and staff members tested over a three-day period, 87 results had returned positive for COVID-19, while 533 were negative. The 87 positive cases included 65 residents and 22 staff members.

To date, Madam Speaker, all the cases remain stable and asymptomatic. Regrettably, Madam Speaker, the first case demised last week and we express our condolences to the family and close friends of the deceased.

On the other hand, Madam Speaker, we are pleased to report that 43 of the 87 positive cases at the Golden Age Home have recovered from COVID-19.



Further, Madam Speaker, all residents and staff at the facility continue to be monitored closely and the compound is managed with enhanced infection prevention and control procedures.

Mustard Seed Communities

In St. Catherine, Madam speaker, after a staff member from a facility owned and operated by the Mustard Seed Communities tested positive for COVID-19 and based on the physical, medical and psychological challenges of the persons under their care, a decision was taken to test all the residents and staff at that location.

Of the staff and resident tested, 16 staff and 20 residents were found to be positive. Madam Speaker, we are now report that all 32 positives have recovered and released from isolation.

Missionaries of the Poor

On Sunday, November 1, Madam Speaker, a cluster of COVID-19 cases was reported at a facility run by Missionaries of the Poor. Of a total of 125 persons sampled, 74 were found to positives, including six (6) staff members and there were 46 negatives while five results are pending.

Madam Speaker, the health team has also collected some 358 samples from seven (7) facilities operated by the Missionaries of the Poor – including one



of its monastery. From the testing of those samples, 88 have been found to be positive, while 220 were negative and we are waiting the outcome of another 50.

The Ministry has since engaged the Missionaries of the Poor, Madam Speaker, to put in place a range of measures to slow transmission at the facility, including adhering to the previous recommendation of no-one in and no one out; strict adherence to the no visitor's policy; having dedicated staff and equipment for the different clusters at the facility and ensuring adequate supply of personal protective equipment.

Inspection of Residential Facilities across the Island

From a national view point on the inspections of residential facilities, Madam Speaker, some 236 such facilities have been inspected, including 203 nursing homes, 13 infirmaries, 14 children's homes and 6 rehabilitation institutions.

Of that number, 99 nursing homes (48.8%), Madam Speaker were found to be compliant with the COVID-19 protocols, the same obtained for 7 of the infirmaries, 4 children's home and two of the rehabilitation institutions.



Madam Speaker, for breaches under the Nuisance Regulations, two privately-run nursing homes, in Manchester and Clarendon respectively, had to be ordered closed.

In the case of prisons and lock ups, 43 of the 106 in country have been inspected so far, with 12 meeting the COVID-19 standard, Madam Speaker, while the other 31 have been given a timeline within which to become compliant.

Warning for Non-Compliance

Madam Speaker, Members of this Honourable House, the Ministry has developed specifically, a protocol for environmental considerations for Nursing Homes and Residential Facilities, a Check List for Nursing Homes and Healthcare Institutions and a Self- Assessment Tool for public facilities and workplaces. These documents have been made available to owners and operators and residential facilities and the local health teams have conducted training sessions.

Therefore, Madam Speaker, I am serving notice to all owners and operators of residential healthcare facilities, that they must become compliant with all the regulations and protocols related to COVID-19 by November 30, 2020. Failure to comply to same, Madam Speaker, will see prosecutions under the



Public Health Act or the Disaster Risk Management Orders, which may result in fines of up to \$1 Million Jamaican Dollars.

Need for Continued Collaboration

Finally, Madam Speaker, is it the intention of the Ministry of Health & Wellness to continue to work with the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, the Ministry of National Security and other Ministries, Agencies and Departments and our private partners to ensure that all Jamaicans are protected, with special emphasis on the most vulnerable in our society. We all have a duty of care to fellow brothers and sisters to protect them from COVID-19.

Madam Speaker, it remains vital that the people of Jamaica perform the various infection prevention and control measures and at no time should we become complacent as our national efforts continue to contain the spread of the virus.

Thank you.