

# NEWS RELEASE

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## LECOM Health Unveils Regional COVID-19 Response Strategy

ERIE, Pa. (July 17, 2020) — Officials with LECOM Health today outlined plans for the health system’s regional COVID-19 mitigation initiative, a program made possible thanks to a \$6.2 million grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services.

Through the LECOM NWPA Regional Response Health Collaborative, LECOM Health will directly support COVID-19 readiness and response planning in 81 long-term care residential facilities in Cameron, Crawford, Elk, Erie, Forest, McKean and Warren counties.

LECOM Health will provide facility consultation that will include clinical, operational and administrative support to prevent residents in these facilities from contracting COVID-19 and optimally manage the facilities during an outbreak. In doing so, LECOM Health – in coordination with the state Department of Health and the Department of Human Services – aims to promote health and stabilize the region’s economy in three ways:

- By directly supporting COVID-19 readiness in long-term care facilities through enhancing infection prevention efforts and improving the quality of care for other priority health care conditions common to facilities;
- By expanding public health surveillance with COVID-19 testing of asymptomatic staff and residents in facilities; and
- By implementing best practices in infection control and COVID-19 response, including but not limited to enhanced testing capacity, infection control consultation and implementation (including contact tracing), advanced clinical care (including onsite and telemedicine-supported clinical care, remote monitoring and physician consultation), and alternate care capacity for long-term care residents.

“Our No. 1 priority is protecting our patients while promoting the overall health and wellbeing of the communities we serve,” said James Lin, D.O., president of the LECOM Institute for Successful Aging. “Throughout this pandemic, LECOM Health has remained ahead of the curve in its mitigation efforts to

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protect its residents, employees and staff from contracting the Coronavirus. Now, with this grant, we can expand our efforts to protect a larger portion of Pennsylvania residents and, ultimately, put safeguards in place to diminish COVID-19's effects on society and our daily lives."

LECOM Health is among seven academic health systems selected to participate in the state's Regional Response Health Collaboration Program. Participants, announced by the Department of Human Services on July 14, collectively received \$175 million for COVID-19 mitigation efforts across the Commonwealth.

The LECOM Health grant was made possible with the support of local and regional leaders, including U.S. Sen. Pat Toomey, U.S. Reps. Mike Kelly and Glenn Thompson, state Sens. Michele Brooks and Dan Laughlin, Reps. Ryan Bizzarro, Pat Harkins, Robert Merski, Kathy Rapp, Curt Sonney and Parke Wentling, Erie County Executive Director Kathy Dahlkemper and City of Erie Mayor Joe Schember.

"LECOM Health has played an essential role over the years in ensuring the health and quality of life for the people of Northwest Pennsylvania and our neighboring states. That role will continue and expand with the Regional Response Health Collaborative," said Laughlin. "The COVID-19 pandemic has clearly shown the need for collaboration within the medical community. Therefore, it is essential that government at all levels take steps to support those initiatives that improve the community's response to the needs of today and those that may arise in the future. The \$6.2 million provided by the state is an important and welcomed investment in those efforts."

From the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, LECOM Health has been the regional leader in employing aggressive, proactive measures to protect its patients and employees. The health system was the first in the region to prohibit visitation at its three skilled nursing facilities as well as the first to implement a policy requiring all employees to be screened when arriving for work. In March, the LECOM Institute for Successful Aging unveiled a dedicated, standalone COVID-19 response unit at its LECOM Nursing and Rehabilitation Center to accommodate a potential surge in post-acute care patients from Erie County hospitals. The LECOM Senior Living Center was also the first Erie County nursing home to secure a rapid COVID-19 test result system that allows LECOM Health staff to gather real-time COVID-19 results in as little as 20 minutes.

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*LECOM Health is a highly innovative, multi-faceted health care and education system. As the nation's only osteopathic academic health center, LECOM Health includes Millcreek Community Hospital, Corry Memorial Hospital, Medical Associates of Erie, LECOM Senior Living Center, LECOM Senior Living Communities, LECOM Medical Fitness and Wellness Center, LECOM Nursing and Rehabilitation Center, LECOM Center for Health and Aging, and the Visiting Nurse Association of Erie County. At the core of LECOM Health is the Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine (LECOM), the largest and one of the most affordable medical schools in the country. Since 1993, LECOM has trained nearly 14,000 health care professionals through its cutting-edge, student-centered College of Osteopathic Medicine, School of Pharmacy, School of Dental Medicine, School of Health Services Administration and School of Graduate Studies at campuses in Erie and Greensburg, Pennsylvania, Bradenton, Florida, and Elmira, New York.*