

Inside the COVID-19 outbreak at Lakepointe nursing home in Clinton Township, Michigan

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Workers at Lakepointe Senior Care and Rehab Center, a nursing home in Clinton Township, Michigan, reached out to the World Socialist Web Site in an effort to expose dangerous conditions and save lives. To submit your own workplace exposure, submit the contact form here now.

COVID-19 is out of control at Lakepointe Senior Care and Rehab Center in Clinton Township, Michigan. At least three residents at this Detroit-area nursing home have died from the disease since Christmas, and workers say that COVID-positive and negative residents are now being housed together in the same wings, and in some cases even the same rooms.

“We don’t have a medical team here for COVID, and our facility is not adequate to take care of COVID-positive residents,” said Jamie, a Lakepointe worker whose name has been changed to protect her from victimization. “We don’t have doctors, and we don’t have the right equipment. All we have are some oxygen tanks. We can’t take care of patients with COVID. They are just sitting here until they die.”

“When residents test positive, they are supposed to be immediately sent out to the hospital, because they are going to expose the whole nursing home,” she explained, “But last Wednesday [Jan 6] we had about 10 people in C wing test positive for COVID. They shut down the wing, and EMS came in and moved them all out of here. But by the next day they had to bring most of them back! They couldn’t find a place for them to go.”

McLaren Macomb hospital—located two miles away from Lakepointe—is now at 91 percent bed occupancy, with 48 COVID patients, five of them in Intensive Care Units (ICUs), according to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS).

Workers at Lakepointe created a makeshift quarantine

area to separate the COVID-positive residents. “They put a plastic barrier through the hallway, to block off the last six rooms on C wing,” Jamie said. “It’s a piece of industrial plastic like they would use if they were doing drywall. They put wood planks on the wall and stapled it to the wood planks.”

But now so many residents have COVID that “there’s no more room on C wing,” and the positive cases “are spaced all throughout the building on B wing and A wing,” Jamie said. “It’s a big mess. Everyone is running around looking like ‘What’s going on? I thought we weren’t doing this!’”

Lakepointe has three wings, called A, B and C, joined by a main lobby. Each wing has more than 20 rooms. Rooms usually hold two residents each. Wings A and B house long-term residents of the nursing home, while C wing normally has new or temporary residents who have arrived recently after having been in a hospital.

Jamie says that “the whole admissions team is out sick with COVID right now, so I don’t know who’s doing the admissions, but they are not properly monitoring new arrivals, they are just putting them in with the general population. They just brought someone in today who was removed from here a week ago after testing positive, and he’s still coughing! They are even putting them in rooms with residents who don’t have COVID, because there’s nowhere else to put them. We don’t have adequate room.”

MDHHS figures show that Lakepointe was COVID-free before Thanksgiving, but that after the holiday, workers began to test positive for the virus. The first recent cases among residents were reported on January 4. By January 11, nine residents were positive and three had died from the disease.

Disturbingly, Jamie says that workers at Lakepointe are allowed to come back to work just seven days after

receiving a positive test result, which is half the amount of time recommended by the CDC.

“Every week since Thanksgiving we have had a group of three or four workers test positive,” Jamie said, “and then they let them come back to work after seven days, without even getting another test. How can you come back after seven days?! It’s like they’re making up their own rules. We all know that just because you don’t have symptoms doesn’t mean that you can’t spread it. It means we’ve got staff walking around the building who are COVID-positive.”

Nursing home workers are criminally exploited. In Michigan, the average wage of a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA)—the main type of care worker at nursing homes—is less than \$15 per hour. Other nursing home workers, like dietary aides, housekeeping and laundry workers, make even less. COVID-positive workers are rarely paid to stay home and quarantine. This economic blackmail forces sick workers to choose between going hungry or endangering everyone in their community by reporting to work.

It is also the norm in the health care industry for low-paid workers to work at more than one facility, increasing the risk of COVID-19 spread. “We have a lot of CNAs and other kinds of workers here who work at different homes where the residents have COVID,” Jamie said.

In Macomb County, where Lakepointe is located, 11 nursing home residents died from COVID-19 in the last week and 46 new cases were reported, in addition to 55 new nursing home worker cases and one worker death.

By the state’s latest figures, 5,038 of Michigan’s 13,533 total COVID-19 deaths have been residents in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities. At least 165 nursing home residents died from COVID-19 in Michigan in the last week alone. Nationwide, over 133,350 have died, accounting for 37 percent of all US COVID-19 deaths, according to The COVID Tracking Project.

“It’s the corporates who are to blame,” Jamie said. “They are welcoming COVID in here. As soon as someone dies, they bring new people in right away. They just say, ‘go ahead and bring them in the building, it doesn’t matter if people are dying, we need the beds filled.’”

Lakepointe Senior Care and Rehab Center is one of 18 nursing homes in Michigan managed by Nexcare

Health Systems. Other Nexcare facilities with ongoing COVID-19 outbreaks include: Bay Shores Senior Care and Rehab Center in Bay City (14 resident cases, seven worker cases); West Oaks Senior Care and Rehab Center in Detroit (12 residents, one worker); and Fisher Convalescent Home in Mayville (11 residents, four workers). Nexcare has self-reported this data.

“It feels like they’re making old people expendable, and it’s not fair. These people don’t even get to see their family. Some of them don’t even have their own cell phones or can’t use their hands to use the phone.”

In an indication of the devastating impact that COVID-19 outbreaks at nursing homes are having on families, Jamie told the WSWs that last fall “a family stormed [Lakepointe] when their relative died after catching COVID here. He was COVID negative when he got here, but then he caught it here and he ended up dying. A young man threatened to kill everyone in the facility, and the police were called.”



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