



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**CONTACT: LTC Chris Messina**

**OFFICE: 615.313.0662**  
christopher.g.messina.mil@mail.mil

## **TN National Guard forms Infectious Disease Team**

**NASHVILLE, Tenn.** – The Tennessee National Guard’s Infectious Disease Team is working hard to improve health procedures in at-risk facilities throughout Tennessee.

The Tennessee Military Department formed the Infectious Disease Team in an effort to assess and improve processes and procedures in at-risk facilities around the state. The mobile, rapidly deployable team is comprised of three members from the Tennessee National Guard’s 118th Air Wing and one member from the Tennessee State Guard, an all-volunteer military reserve force. The team is working in various locations across the state; Nashville, Memphis, Knoxville and Chattanooga.

Team Leader, Lt. Col. Elizabeth Cooper, is the Assistant Chief Nurse at the 118th Air Wing and a Registered Nurse in a civilian role. She says her team has been assisting nursing homes throughout the state by helping develop better ways to clean and prevent COVID-19.

“The Department of Health requested a team to help conduct nursing home visits,” said Cooper. “I have experience with infectious diseases and I used to be the Infection Control Officer at the 118th Air Wing. We’ve been going into these nursing homes, assessing things, and helping them with the health and safety procedures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in these facilities.”

Cooper, along with Maj. William Fitzwater and Staff Sgt. Brandon Hill, who are both Bio-environmental Engineers assigned to the 118th Air Wing, and State Guard member Maj. Jane Gillium, have been working in the Shelby County area. In the last four weeks, they have improved protocols at 32 facilities around Memphis.

“It was very beneficial for them,” said Cooper. “The staff at these facilities were able to get an unbiased opinion from our team. We were able to bring light to some things that they may have missed, and they were very appreciative of that.”

The team’s efforts have now moved to middle Tennessee and the Nashville area. Cooper got the call to come to Nashville’s alternate care facility to see what can be improved there from a sanitation and procedural standpoint.

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The team will continue to use their expertise to better the processes at facilities across the state, and Cooper and her team are happy to help.

“I think it’s awesome,” said Cooper. “This is part of who we are. We want to be able to help our communities in any way possible, and we’ll do it for as long as necessary.”

- (30) -



(Left to right) Staff Sgt. Brandon Hill, Maj. William Fitzwater and Lt. Col. Elizabeth Cooper work to establish COVID-19 sanitation procedures at Nashville's Alternate Care Site, Aug. 27. Cooper, Team Leader for the Infectious Disease Team have been visiting at-risk facilities across the state to improve protocols and procedures to limit the spread of COVID-19. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Timothy Cordeiro)



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