



Department of Health

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Executive Deputy Commissioner

July 3, 2020

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update

Dear Resident / Representative:

This letter is to provide you with an update on the status of the Veterans Home's efforts to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. The safety and wellbeing of all residents is our top priority. We continue to receive regular guidance from federal and state government agencies and the departments that oversee nursing home care and services. The Infection Prevention and Control Committee meets at least once daily to review all new guidance and take action accordingly. The full-time Infection Control nurse is also monitoring our efforts and working closely with the county, regional, and state health department contacts.

A total of twenty residents have tested positive since testing started along with one resident who was presumed to be positive. We mourn the loss of the three residents who died with the virus, and we want to acknowledge the difficulty in honoring them with all of the limitations and restrictions in place. We will hold a formal recognition program for these heroes after the pandemic ends and invite everyone to join us.

We have had no new positive resident cases. Since the last update, we have had two new employee positive cases. Sixteen employees have tested positive or presumptive positive since testing became readily available.

Due to the continued potential for exposure to the virus, all neighborhoods are on some level of quarantine. Employees continue to wear a face shield or goggles with a surgical mask at all times while on the neighborhoods. Use of other Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), such as N95 respirators and/or gowns may also be required as directed by the Infection Prevention and Control Committee.

On the Apple and Maple Neighborhoods, residents may leave their rooms, but must stay on their neighborhood. Residents may go outside with staff assistance, when available. Residents are encouraged to wear masks and maintain a minimum distance of 6 feet between other residents when out of their room.

The Pine Neighborhood is going to keep the fire doors closed in the hallways and continue to restrict access to the dining and living rooms, and residents will be able to go outside in the large courtyard.

The Oak and Hawthorn Neighborhoods are following a higher level of precautions due to the potential contact with employees who have tested positive. These precautionary measures include requiring residents to remain in their rooms with their door closed whenever possible.

The Oak Neighborhood will be on higher level quarantine through July 15th and Hawthorn through July 7th. These dates may change if there is any new exposure or new guidance.

Residents requiring assistance with meals may be brought to the dining area as needed. The Home continues to enforce social distancing in the dining areas by limiting capacity and seating residents no closer than 10 feet from one another.

While we continue to maintain a heightened level of vigilance, the Infection Prevention and Control Committee has agreed to relax some of the rules that are not mandatory because the risk of exposure has proven to be very low.

One of those rules that has changed is the mail process. All mail, newspapers and packages may now be brought to residents as soon as they arrive. Staff will wear disposable gloves and encourage residents to do the same when handling these items. A flyer is attached that explains how mail and packages should be handled.

Food and snacks from outside vendors, families and friends is another area in which we are relaxing restrictions. These food items will be permitted to be brought in from outside, however the items will be taken out of the delivery packaging and placed in facility packaging. We have a variety of food packages, such as aluminum containers and pizza boxes, supplied close to the entrance so staff can easily switch the packaging out and then deliver the food to residents.

We are waiting for guidance on re-opening and will let everyone know when opening is permitted. To keep you abreast of re-opening plans, an invitation to a Zoom meeting will be announced in the coming weeks.

We continue to permit window visits. Plans are being developed to accommodate residents living on the Apple and Maple Neighborhoods (2nd floor) to be able to participate in widow visits from the first floor as well. Please call ahead and speak to the Social Worker or Nurse to assist with accommodating a window visit. This will assist in ensuring staff is available to help each resident in getting downstairs safely and into the assigned window visiting areas.

On this Independence Day weekend, the staff of the Veterans Home wish you and your families the many joys and freedoms that our veteran residents so honorably fought to maintain. We are honored to care for your loved one.

If you have any questions, please let us know.

Sincerely,

Kurt D. Apthorpe

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