

September 25, 2020

Dear Residents and Families,

One of these days I sincerely hope that I will be able to tell you some fantastic and positive news about the world of COVID and long term care! I know that day will come, but sadly I don't see it happening for a little while yet.

There is strong acknowledgement – both on the State and Federal side – that we need to have Visitation Guidelines in place. Last week Thursday, the State put out a memo of Visitation Guidelines. By the end of the day on that same day, CMS (Centers for Medicare and Medicaid) put out their own set of Federal guidelines which superseded the State guidelines! This is just one example of how we are trying to be very nimble as we work on procedures for one – and then modify quickly. It also is an example of why our information may change as we receive changing guidance.

The 9/17/2020 Federal ruling about visitation is summarized by these words from the memo:

- *CMS is committed to continuing to take critical steps to ensure America's healthcare facilities are prepared to respond to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (Covid-19) Public Health Emergency (PHE).*
- *Visitation Guidance: CMS is issuing new guidance for visitation in nursing homes during the COVID-19 PHE. The guidance below provides reasonable ways a nursing home can safely facilitate in-person visitation to address the psychosocial needs of residents.*

In this memo, core principles of COVID-19 Infection Prevention are listed – all of which we have been doing at the Samaritan Campus for months. These include screenings, masks, hand hygiene, PPE, etc.

Specifics are outlined for both Outdoor Visitation and Indoor Visitation.

The Outdoor visits are recommended as we have been doing them – and do again note that these need to take into account weather/Temperatures/poor air quality/ individual's health status and facility's outbreak status. Here is where it continues to be tricky. One case, whether it be for a resident or a staff person, deems it to be an outbreak. Most of us would think an "outbreak" refers to many; the State and Federal and local public health look at ONE CASE being an outbreak.

Testing of all residents happened this past Tuesday. We are waiting for final results – but at this point, it looks like we MAY be ok to reopen the outdoor visits for next week. Please watch for a communication about this on Monday and/or call the Campus Communications Line for that information. We want and need to be sure that we will be safe – with no residents testing positive. We know the weather is going to be cooler this next week – but we want to bundle folks up and let them see family if at all possible.

The Indoor Visitation spells out very clearly how we can facilitate these. As you can imagine, the restrictions are greater when it comes to indoor visits. The first guideline states that we can start these if:

- *There has been no new onset of COVID-19 cases in the last 14 days and the facility is not currently conducting outbreak testing.*

One of the next main parts speaks to the County positivity rates. *If the positivity rate is HIGH (greater than 10%)=Visitation should only occur for compassionate care situations according to the core principles.*

Washington County has been above 10% so we are restricted from doing these at this time.

When we do drop below that 10% for a specific amount of time, and meet all the other guidelines we will be able to do Indoor Visitation. We will be doing these on Ground Floor – just inside the outdoor patio. Screenings, infection prevention tasks and signups will all take place for visitors wishing to visit. We have partitions to create privacy – and are working to obtain sound equipment to facilitate these conversations. We are considering testing visitors with our rapid screens for COVID-19, but this will depend largely on our supply.

Testing has consumed a significant amount of time on the part of our staff. We have had some staff and families reach out for more education on this. Here is a portion of what we have shared with staff.

First of all, THANK YOU, for being compliant with our staff COVID testing. We know that this is invasive, tiring, and takes additional time out of your day/ week. Here are some additional details to the testing and WHY we are doing this as well as some updates:

Mandatory Routine Staff COVID-19 Testing

The Centers of Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS), which is the regulatory body of Nursing Homes, has mandated that all Long Term Care Facilities (LTC) are doing routine staff testing. The frequency of routine staff testing is based on the County's Positivity Rate of the virus. (How bad is the virus in the community we live?)

Community COVID-19 Activity	County Positivity Rate	Minimum Testing Frequency
LOW	<5%	Once a month
MODERATE	5-10%	Once a week
HIGH	>10%	Twice a week

The data provided on the CDC website that we are to reference, is about 2 weeks behind. Currently, the data released on the website is from the week of 9/6/2020 and shows we are at 9.9%. This has come down from 10.1% from the week of 8/30/2020. If we stay "in the yellow" for a minimum of 2 weeks, we can decrease our testing frequency from twice a week to once a week. If we increase back above 10%, we will be back "in the red" and continue with twice weekly testing.

Pray, cross your fingers, wear your mask,

and wash your hands!

Outbreak Testing

What is an outbreak? The word “outbreak” seems scary, doesn’t it? In our current world, an outbreak is defined as 1 resident or 1 staff person that has a confirmed positive COVID test.

What do we do during an outbreak? All staff and residents must be COVID tested. The frequency is done at minimum of every 3-7 days until the outbreak is cleared. Examples: If routine testing states we should be testing twice weekly, then we continue to test staff twice weekly. If routine testing states we should be testing once weekly, we continue once weekly. If (when) we get back to once a month testing, we would still have to test weekly until resolved.

How do we resolve an outbreak? An outbreak is cleared 14 days after the last positive test result is received.

When we say that “we are all in this together” – we really are, in that the County rate affects us and the ability to have Indoor Visits!

As of 2:00 this afternoon, we have not received all of the results from Tuesday’s tests but so far all residents have come back negative. We are waiting on results for a few staff, but at this point have two positives. They are quarantined and doing well. Cumulatively we have had two residents and six staff test positive since March.

A reminder to all families dropping off items in our front drop off location (the red shopping cart). We will be delivering items at **11:00am and 4:00pm Monday-Friday**. We are adjusting our **weekend delivery times to 11:00am and 3:00pm**. You are more than welcome to drop off items at any time but with staff have multiple priorities it works best to have set delivery times. That being said, if you are dropping off perishable items please make sure staff is aware that these were dropped off. If you do not see someone through the glass door, please use the phone to call a staff member to pick up items by dialing 4500.

Each week this communication builds on previous communications, as well as it tries to capture the fluid changes of the week. Please feel free to read the earlier communications on our website at: www.samaritancampus.com. We also provide weekly updates on our Campus Communication Hotline **262-335-4599** where we disclose test results and upcoming plans for Samaritan.

Again, thank you for all of your support through these trying times. We know that is this is hard for staff, residents and families but we will get through this and come out stronger together.

Thank you,

Mari Beth Borek

Mari Beth Borek, NHA
Campus Administrator