



April 29, 2020

Dear Resident and Families,

I hope this letter finds you healthy and well. I know the anxious hope that comes with the discussion of Governor DeWine's proposal to re-open the great State of Ohio. The financial, economic and psychosocial implications of the COVID-19 shut down for our state and nation are daunting. Although we fully understand the need for our nation to move forward, we will be embracing a new normal for years to come. As a Long Term Care Facility, providing services for the most vulnerable population, I do not anticipate the Visitation Restrictions to be lifted any time soon. As Ohio slowly re-opens businesses and services, the procedures and processes inside Welcome Nursing Home will actually be tightening up. As more Ohioans begin to interact, leave their homes and return to work the risk of the virus surging is a significant concern in our environment. Therefore, we have implemented additional interventions in our tool box of infection control prevention strategies to be proactive in our efforts.

I want to share with you some of the more recent interventions we have implemented at Welcome. First, and most notable, our staff who are providing direct care to residents will be wearing Face Shields over their face coverings (masks). Many of these have been made and donated to by innovative business and schools such as Lorain County Community College, Elyria High School, and Ford Motor Company. They are assigned directly to the caregiver and are able to be disinfected. In addition to the face shields, we have also modified our assignment structure for Social Services, Restorative Nursing and our Activities Department. In an effort to decrease the number of staff members responsible for full facility access, we have designated a staff member from each of the departments listed above to either the East or West side of the building. Each of these interventions are being implemented in an attempt to provide the most aggressive infection control practices possible. As of today, Welcome Nursing Home remains a COVID free facility. We have had no staff member or resident test positive for COVID-19 and we are doing everything in our power to keep it that way.

Our Resident Council meetings have been modified to a paper ballot structure where residents can provide input and feedback on activity programming, quality of life concerns, and ask questions. Twice a week, the administrative team has been filming updates that are played on our internal Channel 2 station daily at noon. These video sessions have given us an opportunity to answer the questions submitted by residents, and prepare them for any upcoming changes and procedures being implemented.

Unanticipated circumstances, and the utilization of our quarantine area have necessitated some resident room moves and we appreciate your understanding and support with these decisions. To clarify, we are not admitting residents from the community or hospitals who are recovering from COVID-19. We have re-admitted our own residents who had to go to the hospital for interventions, and we have admitted residents who require skilled nursing services unrelated to COVID-19 issues. We utilize the quarantine area for 14 days in abundance of precautions because these residents had been outside of our facility and we want to monitor them prior to putting them in the general resident areas.

Many family members have asked whether or not our residents were going to receive the Federal Stimulus Checks. Initially, we were under the impression that they would not be receiving the Stimulus Checks unless they had filed taxes in the last two years. However, recent communication we have received has informed us that anyone receiving a social security check should get the stimulus money. This income will not be counted as income and can be spent on resident specific items. Our Social Service team would like you to consider purchasing items such as: personal Ipad or technology for communication, custom seat cushions, mattresses, or clothing replacements. If you would like more specific personal suggestions feel free to call in and speak with Cecilia Harrison (West Side of the building – 100 hall rooms) or Tammy Neal (East Side of the building – 200 and 300 hall rooms).

One challenge we have been trying to stay ahead of is supply chain issues. We are constantly being creative to procure the necessary PPE (personal protective equipment) that our team requires to follow proper infection control protocols. On the front end of this pandemic we had modified our stockpile for both food and PPE. With the virus impacting factory workers we have been notified that there is potential that some of our typical food chain items will be backordered. We have a sufficient stock pile, but there may be times when we have to substitute items without notice. If this becomes necessary, our dietician is always involved to make sure we are providing a nutritious substitute that meets the dietary requirements of the meal provided.

As part of our effort to keep our families informed of our COVID-19 approaches and most recent facility numbers we have added a COVID-19 Updates link on the home page of our website which is www.welcomenursinghome.com. If you click on the COVID-19 Updates hyperlink you will be able to reference all of the Family Letters previously emailed. As mentioned in last weeks update, we will personally call all families within 12 hours of notification if we ever have a COVID Positive Staff or Resident. We will also keep our COVID-19 Updates link tab up to date with any changes to those numbers. We want to remain completely transparent with our families, residents and community and this is another tool we are offering for you to stay fully informed.

I have attached a link to an article written by Oberlin College Student Kate Fishman. In this day and age, skilled nursing facilities are under the microscope and the media is often unkind. We appreciated the opportunity to speak candidly and have our industries challenges and opportunities highlighted. <https://oberlinreview.org/20997/news/local-retirement-nursing-homes-cope-with-pandemic-challenges/>

Once again, I want to thank you for your unwavering support and understanding during this unprecedented time. I am overwhelmed with gratitude in the numerous ways you have all reached out and lifted our team up. I am proud, and yet not surprised, at the professional and dedicated manner in which our team continues to manage the new mandates and procedures implemented to keep your loved ones safe. Stay Well and be safe.

Sincerely,

Heidi J. W. Freas MS OTR/L
Vice President