



July 10, 2020

Dear Residents and Families,

I hope you enjoyed your 4th of July holiday. The weather was lovely but we are certainly in a heat wave this week! As the weeks continue and the numbers trend upwards, we are very grateful to have remained COVID-19 Free. We are constantly educating, modifying and adjusting our internal procedures to provide the highest level of COVID-19 Mitigation. I believe that COVID-fatigue is real, this pandemic is taking a toll on all of us. We recognize the difficulty this has had on all of you as well. We know it has been months since you have hugged your loved ones and this has been hard on all of us. As caregivers, physical distancing is not really in our nature, but we understand the extreme circumstances we are living in and will do what we can to protect those we serve.

We have received additional guidance from the Ohio Department of Health on when and how we can initiate Outside Visitation. You may have heard July 20th as the date these visits can begin, but that is NOT the date for Welcome. One of the stipulations for initiating outside visitation is having your Mandated Staff Testing completed by the Ohio National Guard. We received our testing date today and we are scheduled for testing on July 21, 2020. Therefore, the earliest we can consider doing outside visits will be August 3, 2020. There are several other factors that must be considered prior to being able to offer outside visitation which we will continue to work through as we put a plan in place. One of these considerations is the new Ohio Public Health Advisory System.

Early in July, Governor DeWine released an Ohio Public Health Advisory System (OPHAS) to educate the public on the risk level of traveling through different counties in the state. I have included a screen shot of the OPHAS map on the last page. You can see the colors range from Yellow (level 1) to Purple (level 4). Lorain county was initially an Orange – level 2, but this week hit a new threshold and fell to a Red Level 3. Masks are now required in all public places. Over the last week, the entire state of Ohio has seen a significant spike in the number of positive cases. We are tracking these numbers, as they play a critical role in determining the safety of outside visitation.

Because Lorain County is currently listed at a Level 3 which by definition requires providers to “limit or avoid unnecessary visits to hospitals, nursing homes, and residential care facilities to see others as much as possible”. Based on the definitions provided, we believe that Lorain County must achieve a Level 1 rating in order for us to offer outside visitation.

Once outside visits can be offered, I want to prepare you a bit for the boundaries that will be implemented. Visits must be scheduled in advance with the facility and will be time limited. All visitors must be screened and wear a mask for the duration of the visit. There can be no more than 3 visitors per resident per visit and visitors must be over 2 years of age. Visits will be contact-free and social

distancing must be maintained throughout. Hand sanitizer will be provided for both the resident and the visitors. An assigned staff member will be present for the duration of the visit to provide reminders, encourage proper infection control practices, and to assist the resident as necessary.

As our final process for outside visitation evolves, we will continue to communicate with you any additional expectations or modifications to the mandates listed above. Before the outside visitation option becomes available, I encourage you to strongly consider how this type of physically distanced visit may impact your loved one. Will they understand and comprehend why you are 6 foot apart, will they be able to hear you through a mask at that distance, will being in the same “space” provide them some level of comfort, or will it be confusing. If you would like input on these questions, feel free to call and speak with social services who can help you determine whether a different means of communication and connection may be more beneficial.

In the meantime, and on an ongoing basis, we will continue to offer window visits, phone and video chat calls to keep you connected to your loved ones. The residents are not the only ones who miss seeing your smiling faces here on a regular basis. We are so grateful for the support and understanding you all have offered us as we have been forced to make such difficult decisions. As always, feel free to reach out if you have questions or concerns. And most importantly, stay healthy!

Sincerely,

Heidi J. W. Freas MS OTR/L

Director of Quality Assurance