

December 31, 2021

Dear Residents, Tenants, Family Members and Employees,

I want to wish you all a very Happy New Year! We have been enjoying various activities for the residents and employees this week. In the last 24 hours we have had around 10 residents and 3 employees experience gastrointestinal symptoms. We have been in contact with Catholic Charities and the NH Public Health Department and have shut down to community dining, community activities and admissions. We are recommending that you refrain from visiting until after the gastrointestinal outbreak has passed.

We have one employee who is still in quarantine due to Covid 19. We are following the CMS and NH public health guidance of testing close contacts that this employee has had. This weeks' round of testing came back with all negative tests. We will be doing another round of testing for close contacts this coming Sunday and Monday.

The transmission rate in Belknap County continues to be in the Red zone at a substantial/high community transmission rate. The current positivity rate is 12.98%. If you are not vaccinated please consider doing this and please get your booster. We are continuing with the following interventions and actions:

- All staff are wearing a surgical mask and eye protection at all time in all resident/patient care areas.
- Approved unvaccinated staff continue to wear an N95 mask and eye protection at all times and in all resident/patient care areas.
- We screen all staff, visitors, vendors and other health care providers upon entering the building.
- All residents are assessed for signs and symptoms of Covid-19 two times a day and if there is noticeable change in their condition.
- We test all approved non-vaccinated staff two times per week per state guidelines.

Visitation Guidelines

Please see the visitation guidelines below. It is very important that we follow the core principles of Infection Control during visits to protect our residents. They are listed as follows:

Core Principles of Infection Control

- Please practice good hand hygiene at all times while in the nursing home. Alcohol gel will be provided as you enter the facility and there are alcohol-based hand rub stations throughout the facility for your use. Please ask the staff if you are unsure where to find alcohol gel.
- A medical grade mask will be provided to you. Please make sure you wear this mask at all times during your visit, with the exceptions as noted below. We are also requesting the use of eye wear which will be provided for you.
- Physical distancing of 6 feet is also strongly encouraged, with exceptions listed below.

- You will receive education and a copy of this education at the time of your visit and will be asked to sign acknowledgement that you have received education about visit expectations and infection control.
- You may also refer to signage posted throughout the facility and ask staff for clarification as necessary.
- Visits do not need to be scheduled in advance. We would appreciate calling ahead for visits after hours or at peak times such as during mealtimes, so we can ensure that there are not too many visitors in the same area for everyone's safety.
- You will be asked if you have been vaccinated. You are not required to answer this but it is helpful to us to know this information for the safety of the community. We strongly advise all our visitors to be vaccinated for the protection of all our residents, visitors and employees. If you have any questions about vaccination, or would like any additional information we would be happy to help you with this. Please ask to see our Director of Nursing, Assistant Director of Nursing/Infection Preventionist for vaccination information.
- If you decline to disclose your vaccination status we must assume you are not vaccinated and you will need to keep your mask on at all times during your visit, even when you are alone with your loved one in their room.
- You will be offered COVID testing. For your convenience we have rapid COVID testing available to all visitors at no cost to you. The test takes just a few minutes to process. It is not required that you be tested before your visit, it is optional.
- We no longer require screening before scheduling a visit as the visits no longer need to be scheduled in advance. When you arrive for a visit you and your party will be screened at that time. If anyone in your party does not meet the screening criteria their visit will be postponed until the screening criteria is met.
- If anyone in your party is not able to understand visitation guidelines or infection control measures, that person must be accompanied by someone who can ensure that infection prevention measures will be maintained, or the nursing home reserves the right to monitor the visit.
- If anyone in your party refuses to adhere to the safety and infection control measures during the visit, that person may be asked to leave and future visits may be restricted.
- You will be given a fresh medical grade mask to wear during your visit. Additional PPE will be available (gowns, gloves, eye protection) and offered based on community transmission or the presence of COVID-19 cases in the nursing home. You may also request any of these items at the time of screening.
- The PPE that was provided to you must be worn and maintained throughout the entire visit.
- Visits may occur in residents' rooms or in visiting areas. The appropriate area will be discussed with you at the time of your visit and will depend on the number of visitors in any area.
- We ask that you not stop to chat with any other residents or family members while you are here. Please stay in the designated area with the resident you are here to see.
- You will need to wear the mask provided to you and physically distance during your visit at all times while you are in the facility. During times of substantial or high community transmission please keep your mask on at all times unless you and the resident you are visiting are eating a meal together in the residents' private room or other private location. This may need to be arranged ahead of your visit. Please check with the nursing home in advance if you wish to dine with your loved one. If your loved one is severely immunocompromised, you may not remove your mask and must maintain physical distancing. Please check with your nurse if you are uncertain of your loved one's medical risk.

Pet visits

If you are planning to bring a pet into visit, there are a couple of things that we would need prior to them coming into the building. You should bring us a copy of their health certificate from the Vet, showing that they are up to date with their shots. We also need you to complete a questionnaire about your pet. Please call Mindy at ext. 330 to arrange this prior to coming in with your pet. Dogs need to be on leashes at all times, cannot be a retractable leash. Cats need to be in carriers.

Please note that those residents who receive the monoclonal antibodies will need to wait 90 days to receive their booster vaccine. We will schedule a booster clinic at that time.

Many family members drop things off at the door for their loved ones. We ask that you please ring the doorbell and give it to a staff member and not leave it on the bench in the vestibule. We want to make sure that your loved one receives what you have dropped off and that it does not go missing.

The positivity rate of Covid 19 continues to be on the rise. Belknap County is considered in high/substantial transmission. I would like to encourage you all to wear masks when you are in a public setting. This applies even to vaccinated people due to the different variants that are being discovered.

While we know this is an incredibly challenging time for you and your family, please be assured that we remain committed to the care and support of your loved one here at St. Francis. Their safety, health and well-being remain our firm commitment.

We will continue to keep you updated as time goes on.

God bless,

Brenda Buttrick RN, LNHA
Administrator