

Long Term Care

November 23, 2020

Dear Resident, Family Member, and/or Legal Representative

Yesterday and today, several more employees were COVID-positive as determined through our testing strategy. Again, these positive results arose during our routine and twice weekly testing of all employees. None of the employees had symptoms of viral illness. This demonstrates that testing is working and employees can be immediately isolated.

On Sunday, November 22nd all of the residents were COVID-tested following the recommendations of epidemiology and are currently without signs or symptoms of viral illness. Given the high case rates in the Borough and several positive employees, **beginning 11/24/20 every LTC resident will be COVID-tested twice weekly.** All resident testing done yesterday is negative.

Unfortunately our nursing home neighbors across Alaska have also had serious employee *and* resident outbreaks. Despite the best efforts of many healthcare professionals across the state, COVID outbreaks continue. As of Friday only 8 of the 19 nursing homes across Alaska are resident COVID-clear (have had no cases of COVID in their resident populations). SPH LTC is one of those eight facilities and we are thankful for our employees, our leadership and for the perseverance of our families. That said, COVID cases in Alaska are rising rapidly, as outlined in a public State communication 11/20/20 regarding case trends and predictions:

- For the seventh week in a row, more cases (3,930) were reported in Alaskans this week than any previous week, a 28% increase over last week.
- The statewide positivity rate is at a record high for the seventh week in a row. Increases in testing are not keeping up with increases in cases.
- Cases are increasing across urban and rural regions and increased in nearly every region this week. All regions of Alaska have high community transmission and are at a high alert level. The largest increase in cases was again in the Anchorage Municipality, which averaged over 300 new cases a day this week, for a 14-day case rate per 100,000 people of 92 up from 72 last week, **closely followed by the Kenai Peninsula Borough, where the 14-day average case rate increased from 57 to 97 per 100,000 population.**
- An updated model epidemic curve predicts Alaska's cases will continue to accelerate over the next week and are expected to double again within the next 39 days or sooner, with a daily growth rate near 2%. This curve reflects data up through November 7 but excludes some of the large increases in the last week as data is sometimes delayed in reporting; the true current daily growth rate may be higher than 2%.

As we move toward Thanksgiving we remain at Phase 1 lockdown. SPH LTC with our Dietary Department partners have planned a lovely dinner for the Residents on Thanksgiving Day. It would only be better if our families could join, but we must remain vigilant and visitation is not allowed, except in compassionate end-of-life care situations. Because of our high geographical-based positivity rates we continue to test all employees serving the LTC facility twice weekly. Health screens including temperature checks for all staff continue. Twice daily temperature checks for all residents continues and we closely monitor for any sign or symptom of viral illness in staff or residents. Staff are required to stay home if they have any symptoms and are sent home if

symptoms arise during their shift. Unfortunately, many positive cases have had no symptoms. We continue to practice the highest infection prevention standards to avoid any transmission to the residents.

Ways in which all citizens can help is by following the guidance published by State of Alaska Department of Public Health:

- **Practice the 3 W's: Wear a mask, watch your distance, and wash your hands.**
- *Avoid the 3 C's: Crowded places, close contact settings and confined/enclosed spaces. Keep contacts limited and social circles small. Avoid indoor gatherings.*
- *Limit your errands/outings.*
- *Watch for COVID-19 symptoms. Get tested even if you have just one symptom or mild symptoms.*
- *Don't be around others if you are not feeling well. Stay home and isolate immediately.*
- *If you test positive, let close contacts know so they can protect others.*
- *Quarantine quickly if you are exposed to COVID-19, for a full 14 days.*
- *Protect our health care system – get your flu shot, stay safe.*

In closing, we are encouraged that the *State of Alaska Department of Epidemiology* and the *Alaska State Hospital and Nursing Home Association* have formed workgroups to begin to plan for the receipt of an eventual COVID vaccine. As of the date of this letter, there are no FDA-approved vaccinations available. The State and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) will guide us in the eventual receipt of vaccines in Homer. Several hospital leaders here, including our Pharmacy are participating in the workgroups. Families will be notified of vaccination plans as they become known to us.

Please call us with questions. We appreciate your patience as we keep the residents safe.

Respectfully,



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