



April 16, 2020

To All Staff,

As we mentioned in our first employee letter, we would be following up with weekly letters updating you on what we are doing, as communication is very important in a time of uncertainty. We want to maintain a safe workplace as we adapt practices protecting the health of employees, residents, and others.

Status Update

GSVE: Last week we informed the staff, residents and residents' health care proxy at Good Shepherd Village at Endwell that a casual employee who worked in the Memory Care Assisted Living Residence had just informed us she had tested positive for COVID-19, and that she was under quarantine. Her last day worked was 3/29/20. We are now well past the 14 day window post-exposure and **we have no active or suspected cases amongst our residents**. While we have had some staff members who displayed some symptoms of concern, we must remember it is also cold, flu and allergy season. All have followed up appropriately with health care providers and followed their recommendations on care and isolation. While we understand staff, residents and their families will certainly be anxious about this situation, we have consulted with Broome County Health Department who have directed us that our current screening and infection control practices are appropriate in this situation and they have not proposed any additional testing of our residents or staff at this time.

GSFH and Chase: We have had staff and residents at both campuses who exhibited some symptoms of concern, but none have tested positive for COVID-19.

NYS Executive Orders regarding Masks

The Governor recently issued two Executive Orders relating to masks. The first required that: "For all essential businesses or entities, any employees who are present in the workplace shall be provided and shall wear face coverings when in direct contact with customers or members of the public. Businesses must provide, at their expense, such face coverings for their employees." The second Executive Order issued yesterday requires "all people in New York to wear a mask or a face covering when out in public and in situations where social distancing cannot be maintained."

Based on the above, **all our employees must wear masks at any time they cannot observe social distancing (6 foot distance)**. All our campuses are providing masks to staff. At GSFH, GSVE Health Care, and Chase Memorial we are providing and requiring surgical masks at this time. We have N95 masks but they should only be used when we are dealing with an active or suspected active covid-19 case. At GSVE IL and GSFH office personnel only areas, we are providing surgical masks but employees may opt to wear cloth masks which they are required to launder. We are also providing residents in Independent Living with cloth masks to wear when social distancing is not possible.

Personal Protective Equipment

We continue to pursue all sources for additional PPE. We are ordering PPE in quantities never before imagined. It is not unusual for us to order 15,000 surgical masks, 3,000 N95 masks, and 1,000 gowns. The problem is deliveries of PPE are sporadic as every health care facility in the United States is competing for the same inventory of products. At this point in time, we feel we have an adequate supply but this can change quickly if we have an increased need.

Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act

The CARES Act was enacted to address the financial difficulties that have resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic. Included in this law was a provision that provides **special retirement plan loan options** for qualified plan participants. We have elected to amend our retirement plan to incorporate this provision. However, it is important to emphasize that this new loan provision only applies to individual plan participants that meet certain requirements. If you think you may qualify, and are interested in learning more about the **retirement plan loan options due to COVID-19 related financial consequences**, please contact the participant service center at 1-800-716-3742.

Media Coverage of Long Term Care Facilities

Today's Press and Sun-Bulletin had this inflammatory headline online: "**NY withheld nursing home COVID-19 details for weeks. Thousands died. Here's how secrecy impacted lives.**" This is in keeping with a disturbing trend we have noted in the media coverage of COVID-19. While hospitals are rightfully celebrated for their courage and dedication during this pandemic, nursing homes are stigmatized as 'hot spots' for infection, and the implication is if someone tests positive for COVID-19 in a nursing home or retirement community, the facility must be at fault. The truth is COVID-19 is present in Broome and Chenango Counties, and even with 100% compliance to the best infection control practices currently available, the unfortunate truth is that we may still see COVID-19 cases in our facilities. While we screen our employees as they report to work and every 8 hours thereafter, carriers can be asymptomatic for up to 14 days. This means someone may feel fine, report to work, and potentially spread the disease. Until accurate, rapid result testing is easily available, the system does have a degree of vulnerability. We are doing our best to combat this, but we have to face the reality of the situation.

Another article in the Press called for people to send in their stories of their loved ones experience in nursing facilities to "help break what has amounted to a wall of silence erected by New York State government, county governments *and the nursing homes themselves.*" We can only speak for Good Shepherd's facilities. We are committed to open, transparent communication. We have mailed, distributed and posted weekly updates to all our staff, residents and their family members. When we learned a GSVE casual employee had tested positive, we issued an additional letter to all GSVE staff, residents and/or their health care proxies. We respond to every request for information from local and state health departments fully and truthfully.

As staff, you continue to exhibit courage, professionalism and compassion during this difficult time, and we applaud and are grateful to all of you.

Thank you for your hard work and help in keeping us all safe and healthy. We are continuing to refine our planning process as new information becomes available. Our daily meetings with all managers at each campus will continue. Senior Management will also continue to meet on a daily bases. We are continuing to do everything possible to support the health and safety of our residents and employees.

Currently, we do not have a resident with the COVID-19, but that's not to say we won't have one in the future. We are in this together, and by each of us diligently doing our part, we can stop the spread. Please, if you have questions or concerns, contact your HR department or your manager so we can address them.

Sincerely,

Linda Parke
Director of Human Resources