

November 22, 2021

Beatitudes Residents and Families,

Good afternoon.

We have some updates regarding visitation in the Health Care Center. This guidance is directly from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).

On November 12, CMS issued updated guidance that almost returns nursing home visitation to pre-pandemic practices. Effective immediately, nursing home visitation is now available to all residents at all times. Nursing homes are no longer required to restrict visitation during outbreak investigations or for residents who are on transmission-based precautions due to active COVID-19 infection or identification as a “close contact” of someone with COVID-19 infection.

These welcome changes are due largely to high levels of vaccination among residents, increasing vaccination among staff and declines in COVID-19 cases in nursing homes. While many COVID-era practices will remain, incorporating these practices into normal operations is the clear path forward.

Recognizing that these principles have become an accepted part of normal operations for the foreseeable future, it feels worthwhile to review for clarity. These core principles, identified by CMS and consistent with guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) include:

- **Screening for all who enter the nursing home.** Visitors with a positive viral test, signs or symptoms of COVID-19, or who meet the criteria for quarantine (prolonged exposure by an unvaccinated individual to a person diagnosed with COVID-19) should not enter the nursing home.
- **Regular hand hygiene.** Alcohol-based hand rub is preferred in most circumstances.
- **Face masks and physical distancing** in accordance with [CDC guidance](#) and as explained later in this letter.
- **Instructional signage and education on COVID-19 signs and symptoms, infection control precautions, and other applicable practices** determined by the nursing home such as specified entries, exits, and routes to designated areas, etc.
- **Frequent cleaning and disinfection** of high-touch surfaces and cleaning and disinfection of designated visiting areas after each visit.
- **Appropriate staff use of personal protective equipment (PPE).**
- **Effective cohorting of residents.**
- **Testing of residents and staff** according to requirements.

Individuals who are unwilling or unable to adhere to core principles of infection prevention, even after instruction and assistance from our staff, may be restricted from the Beatitudes Campus Health Care Center

## VISITATION

**Visitation is now permitted for all residents at any time.** While CMS states outdoor visitation remains the preferred method of visitation for residents and/or visitors who are not fully vaccinated, these individuals are not limited to outdoor visitation.

**The Health Care Center may no longer limit the number of visitors, frequency of visits, or length of visits.** The Health Care Center may not require scheduling of visits; however, we must continue to ensure that appropriate physical distancing can occur during visits. This means that large gatherings or events during which physical distancing cannot be maintained is discouraged. Visits may take place in resident rooms or in a designated visiting space. If a resident's roommate is unvaccinated or is immunocompromised regardless of vaccination status, visits should not take place in that resident's room. Visitors should additionally limit movement within the Health Care Center, going directly to the resident's room or visiting space.

**Source control (masking) and physical distancing should be observed as follows:**

- **In areas of substantial to high community transmission:** residents and visitors should wear facemasks and practice physical distancing at all times regardless of vaccination status.
- **In areas of low to moderate community transmission:** residents and visitors are recommended to wear facemasks and practice physical distancing, especially if either the resident or the visitor is unvaccinated or at risk for severe disease. If both the resident and visitor are fully vaccinated and none are at risk for severe disease, the resident and visitor may choose to remove facemasks and forego physical distancing during the visit.
- The CDC's [COVID Data Tracker – County View](#) should be used to determine community transmission rates.
- **Visitors must wear facemasks and physical distance from other residents and staff at all times** regardless of vaccination status.

## VISITATION DURING AN OUTBREAK

**Indoor visitation may occur for all residents at all times, including when the Health Care Center is investigating or experiencing an outbreak.** Visitors should be notified of the outbreak and the risks associated with visiting. Visitation should take place in the resident's room and residents and visitors must wear facemasks regardless of vaccination status.

While not recommended, CMS has stated that residents on transmission-based precautions may now receive visitors. Visitors should be notified of the risks associated with visiting. Visitation should take place in the resident's room and residents must wear facemasks. The Health Care Center may offer the visitor personal protective equipment for the duration of the visit but are not required to do so.

## **VISITOR TESTING AND VACCINATION**

The Health Care Center staff may offer or ask about visitor status of both testing and vaccination. Visitor testing is encouraged in areas of high to substantial community transmission but is not required. The Health Care Center may offer testing to visitors and/or encourage visitors to be tested during the 2-3 days prior to the visit. The Health Care Center may also offer education on vaccination.

The Health Care Center may not restrict visitors who decline testing or vaccination or who fail to show proof of testing or vaccination. Visitors who decline to disclose vaccination status must wear a face covering at all times.

## **ACTIVITIES, DINING AND RESIDENT OUTINGS**

Source control (masking) and physical distancing are recommended for all, regardless of vaccination status, in common areas. Residents should be permitted to leave the Health Care Center as they choose and reminded to adhere to core principles of infection prevention while on leave.

Upon return, the Health Care Center must screen the resident and may choose to test unvaccinated residents upon return if they leave frequently or are out of the nursing home for more than 24 hours.

Upon return from an outing, the Health Care Center should test the resident if the resident reports close contact with an individual with COVID-19. Unvaccinated residents with close contact should be placed on transmission-based precautions and quarantine. The Health Care Center may also choose to place on quarantine any unvaccinated residents for whom there is doubt about adherence to core principles of infection control on behalf of either the resident or those with whom the resident interacted during the outing.

Per CMS guidelines, we will enact the above visitation guidance immediately. You will no longer need to call and schedule visitation times with Sarah. The process will be as follows for visitation:

1. Enter the Health Care Center via the west entrance; this is located behind the building.
2. When you arrive, a staff member immediately inside the door will screen you. You will be asked if you have any signs/symptoms or exposure to anyone who is COVID-19 positive. Your temperature will be taken, and you will be asked to sanitize your hands.
3. The screener will need to know if you are here for an outside visit or if you are planning an in-room visit. A call will be placed to the unit to bring your loved one downstairs for an outside visit. If your visit will be an in-room visit, then a determination will be made to the status of vaccination status if your loved one is in a shared room.
4. We will also have the Lobby and Conference Room available for visits.
5. While in the building and on the units, visitors must maintain social distancing of 6 feet at all times regardless of vaccination status, and wear facemasks and face shields. This will pertain to both the residents and the staff. In an outbreak, situation gowns will be added as part of our Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
6. Movement needs to be kept to a minimum, meaning going directly to the resident's room or visiting space.

These changes bring us the closest to pre-pandemic operations that they have been since March 2020. We are excited to move into the next phase of our new normal. We ask that everyone be diligent in the requirements of infection prevention practices, including hand sanitation, wearing facemasks, face shields and, in some instances, gowns.

Again, we thank you for enduring this crazy ride with us over the past 20 months and for your support and encouragement.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Blessings to all!

Teresa Borton RN, Director of Nursing, Administrator

Matt Brogen RN, Nurse Manager

Cheryl Knupp, Senior VP of Health Services