

March 12, 2021

Dear Resident and Resident Representative,

I am very pleased to announce the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) have provided new guidance, effective immediately for long-term care facilities. Many of the current visiting restrictions have been removed, but MDH and CMS remind us we are NOT yet returning where we were in 2019. I do want to clarify that the guidance provided is not the same as the information issued by the Centers for Disease Prevention and Control. I am sure this will raise some questions. The CDC does not have governing restrictions over long-term care facilities.

That being said, the vast majority of our residents have received their COVID-19 vaccinations and are ready and anxious to receive visitors!!!!

What is new under the guidance:

- Visitation is now open and available to our communities with minimal restrictions. These restrictions include:
 - Newly diagnosed case of COVID-19 in staff or resident – restrictions are lessened from previous guidance.
 - Residents who are in quarantine for exposure to COVID-19 or new admissions may not receive visitors.
 - Residents who are not vaccinated for COVID-19 may not receive visitors **WHEN** the county positivity rate exceeds 10% **AND** when less than 70% of the community's residents have been vaccinated.
- Visitors are neither required to be COVID-19 tested nor vaccinated for COVID-19. That said, ***although it is not mandated, we are still strongly encouraging this practice. Significant numbers of COVID-19 findings have actually been from essential caregivers entering our buildings. Many of these visitors have been asymptomatic and without testing we might never have known about the exposure.*** Minnesota has active cases of COVID-19 diagnosed each day (1,096 new cases March 11, 2021); we are also reminded daily of the new variants that are circulating in our state/country.
- You will no longer need to schedule your visits.

What has not changed under the new guidance:

- Visitors will be screened prior to entering the community. If you have a fever, signs of respiratory illness, or have been in contact with anyone diagnosed with COVID-19 you will not be permitted to visit.
- Visitors will need to:
 - Perform hand hygiene prior to entering.
 - Wear a face mask or face covering while visiting

- Maintain social distancing of 6 feet from residents and staff. The new guidance does state “If the resident is fully vaccinated, they can choose to have close contact (including touch) with their visitor while wearing a well-fitting face mask and performing hand-hygiene before and after.”
- Travel directly to the resident’s room or apartment via the shortest distance possible.
- Common areas/lounges and dining rooms will be reserved exclusively for residents.
- Visitors should not enter staff offices.
- Outdoor visits are still the preferred visiting location.
- Visitors must notify the facility if they become ill/test positive for COVID-19 within 14 days of visiting a resident.
- Residents who are on quarantine or isolation for COVID-19 may not receive indoor visitation.

We are excited to have visitors returning to our communities! We realize this enforced separation has been very difficult for everyone.

Sincerely,

Lynn Gerard, RN, BSN

Director of Quality Improvement, Education and Risk Management

LGerard@GA-ER.org

Guardian Angels Senior Services

508 Freeport Ave, Suite A

Elk River, MN 55330