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March 31, 2021

To All Staff:

TESTING

Each week we will provide you with updated information on COVID-19 testing at all of our campuses.

We will no longer be presenting the charts for testing for cause and mass testing but will continue to provide narratives for any new positive cases.

Staff Testing 3/24/21-3/30/21

In the last round of staff testing, we had the following positive results:

GSFH: No new positive test results

Chase: No new positive test results

GSVE

3/24/21

- An employee who works in our Independent Living administration department tested positive for COVID-19. The staff member is asymptomatic and will self-isolate for the required number of days. Contact tracing is complete and no residents or staff members were in close contact.

3/27/21

- As part of our weekly staff testing, two staff members have tested positive for COVID-19. One staff member works in the Maintenance department and one staff member works in the Dietary office. Both employees are asymptomatic and will follow the Health Departments recommendation for isolation and quarantine. There were no residents who were considered in close contact. There is one staff member considered a close contact, per NYS DOH the staff member who is considered a close contact does not need to quarantine because the staff member was fully vaccinated.

3/29/21

- A visitor to the Skilled Nursing Facility tested positive for COVID-19. The visitor is asymptomatic. There is one resident who is considered is considered exposed (the resident having the visit.) There are no staff who are considered exposed.

Resident Testing 3/24/21-3/30/21

GSFH

3/26/21

- Three of our residents on our rehab unit tested positive for COVID-19. These residents will be on isolation for 14 days. There were no close contacts to any of the residents.

Chase: No new positive test results.

GSVE: No new positive tests results.

COVID related Deaths 3/24/21-3/30/21

GSFH: We are happy to report there were no COVID-19 related resident deaths at GSFH.

Chase: We are happy to report there were no COVID-19 related resident deaths at Chase.

GSVE: We are happy to report there were no COVID-19 related resident deaths at GSVE.

Vaccination

- **SNF and ACF**
 - In Broome County (GSFH and GSVE) and Chenango County (Chase), NYS through the local health department is supplying vaccines for new residents, and we are partnering with our Long Term Care pharmacy, the Medicine Shoppe, to administer these vaccines.
- **Independent Living**
 - **The Medicine Shoppe, our Long Term Care Pharmacy has offered clinics for our IL residents.**
 - GSFH: All apartment residents who elected to receive the vaccine received the vaccine.
 - GSVE: All IL residents who elected to receive the vaccine have received it.
 - NYS residents over 65 or with certain underlying conditions are also eligible to be vaccinated at other sites. To explore eligibility, available sites and learn how to schedule an appointment, access this link: <https://am-i-eligible.covid19vaccine.health.ny.gov/>
- **Staff**
 - The federal program which supplied vaccines for staff is ending, and we are transitioning into a new phase of the staff vaccination program. In Broome County (GSFH and GSVE) and Chenango County (Chase), NYS through the local health department will supply vaccines for new staff or staff who had previously declined the vaccine, and we are partnering with our Long Term Care pharmacy, the Medicine Shoppe, to administer these vaccines.
 - As of 3/30/21, NYS residents age 30 or older, or with certain underlying conditions are also eligible to be vaccinated at other sites. As of 4/6/21, the age requirement will expand to those 16 and over. To explore eligibility, available sites and learn how to schedule an appointment, access this link: <https://am-i-eligible.covid19vaccine.health.ny.gov/>.

We continue to educate our employees on the vaccines effectiveness and safety record, and to advocate for our employees to help protect themselves and our residents by being vaccinated. There will be no cost to employees for this vaccination.

While this is not mandatory for our residents or staff, **we are hoping all of our eligible residents and staff will elect to be vaccinated unless there are contraindications. And please note that of the five most recent staff members to test positive, only one had been vaccinated.**

DID YOU KNOW?

If you are fully vaccinated (2 weeks following second dose of a 2-dose vaccine) AND are within 3 months of last dose- And you are asymptomatic- that you Do NOT have to quarantine following exposure to someone with known COVID? So- instead of being stuck at home- you could be living your life!

We are attaching some information from the CDC regarding vaccinations for LTC workers.



All 6 living US Presidents, both Republicans and Democrats, have now endorsed vaccination against COVID-19, with President Trump being the most recent President to make a direct appeal to the American people to get vaccinated. And all 6 Presidents and First Ladies have received their vaccines. **Vaccination is not a political issue!!**

- **Current Vaccination Statistics:**

Vaccination Status

	SNF Residents	ACF Residents	SNF Employees	ACF Employees	IL Employees
GSFH	Rehab 100% Cameo Court 97%	100.0%	58.0%	42.0%	n/a
GSVE	96%	96.0%	79.0%	48.0%	74.0%
Chase	99%	n/a	38.0%	n/a	n/a

NYS DOH Mandatory Testing for all Staff (Reminder)

Per the DOH guidelines for COVID-19 testing, the week runs from **Wednesday-Tuesday**. The new week starts today, Wednesday, March 31, which will run March 31-April 6. When scheduling or planning your appointments to be tested, **please keep the week dates in mind in order to be in compliance with the Executive Orders and DOH guidance regarding week testing.**

The testing times for each campus may have been modified due to the Easter:

-	<u>GSFH</u>	<u>GSVE</u>	<u>Chase</u>
Wednesday, March 31, 2021	7a-9a	2p-4p	
Thursday, April 01, 2021	2p-4p		6a-8a & 1p-4p
Friday, April 02, 2021	7a-9a is cancelled	2p-4p	
Saturday, April 03, 2021			
Sunday, April 04, 2021			
Monday, April 05, 2021		2p-4p	6a-8a & 1p-4p
Tuesday, April 06, 2021	7a-9a (added for this week only) & 2p-4p	2p-4p	

If you miss the weekly testing, you cannot work and will not receive any pay, including benefit time, until you are tested. This includes using benefit time that was pre-approved for any time you are non-compliant

prior to being tested. Please understand we are taking this strong stance not to be punitive, but because NYS DOH will be monitoring our compliance with the testing requirements, and any non-compliance among our employees can result in the facility itself being penalized.

In addition, if you had a positive test result within the last 90 days, for GSVE, GSFH, and GSC please contact the HR Wellness RN, and for Chase please contact the DON, to make arrangements to get a rapid antigen test. This is the manner in which you will be tested for the next 90 days.

Please help us meet this NYS DOH requirement by planning ahead and taking responsibility to be in compliance even if you are scheduled to be out for some portion of the testing week. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Effective last week, ACF and IL staff will only be required to test once a week. SNF employees are still required to test twice per week. If you are unclear as to which level of care you are assigned, please see or call your manager, or reference the postings near the time clocks. In the future, we will be identifying those levels of care by color coded stickers to attach to your badge. These are on order and will be distributed when they arrive.

NYS Quarantine Travel Restrictions

Domestic travelers will no longer be required to quarantine after entering New York from another U.S. State or U.S. Territory starting April 1st. While no longer required, the NYS Department of Health still recommends quarantine after domestic travel as an added precaution. Mandatory quarantine remains in effect for international travelers.

All travelers must continue to fill out the Traveler Health Form. Individuals should continue strict adherence to all safety guidelines to stop the spread - wearing masks, socially distancing and avoiding gatherings.

Regardless of quarantine status, all individuals exposed to COVID-19 or returning from travel must:

- Continue daily symptom monitoring through Day 14;
- Continue strict adherence to all recommended non-pharmaceutical interventions, including hand hygiene and the use of face coverings, through Day 14 (even if fully vaccinated);
- Must immediately self-isolate if any symptoms develop and contact the local public health authority or their healthcare provider to report this change in clinical status and determine if they should seek testing.

We are highly recommending for the health and welfare of our residents and staff members that you adhere to the travel restrictions. We all have a responsibility to our fellow New Yorkers, our co-workers, and our residents, to do our part to avoid the spread of COVID-19.

Aegis Lab (Reminder)

Aegis Lab is an independent laboratory that performs our weekly COVID-19 diagnostic testing. The sample swab is submitted to Aegis Lab along with your insurance information. Unfortunately, it has been brought to our attention that Excellus, and perhaps other insurance carriers are mailing the check to the individual instead of paying Aegis directly for the testing services provided. You should receive a letter from Aegis Lab indicating that these funds belong to Aegis and must be remitted to them immediately. Therefore, you must deposit the check that you received from your insurance carrier and make a payment at: <https://aegis.synergenpay.com>, to avoid further actions. . If you don't receive a letter from Aegis, but you did receive a check from your insurance carrier, please call Aegis at 833-230-4420. Aegis will be tracking payments against their list of those impacted.

We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause, but the situation was not under ours or Aegis' control.

Furloughed Staff

Furloughing is no longer having a major impact on facility staffing, so we will no longer be reporting on this metric. Of course, if this changes, we will re-introduce this.

Positivity Rates and COVID Zones

CMS positivity rates by county is the metric used for visitation per NYS. Note CMS stats lag one week behind.

County	FIPS	State	FEMA Region	Population	NCHS Urban Rural Classification	Tests in prior 14 days	14-day test rate	Percent Positivity in prior 14 days	Test Positivity Classification - 14 days
Broome County, NY	36007	NY	2	190,488	Small metro	13,889	7,291	4.6%	Green
Chenango County, NY	36017	NY	2	47,207	Non-core	4,546	9,630	3.2%	Green

Currently, none of our facilities are in a COVID-19 cluster hot spot.

Screening Question Reminder.....

COVID-19 is a respiratory virus that presents with a wide range of symptoms. Fever is common, but not always present when an individual is infected with COVID-19. Diarrhea can also be a symptom which many people might not associate with COVID-19. GSC has implemented a symptom screening process to help identify any staff that should remain out of work. Please, be mindful of the symptoms we screen for when reporting to work. If you have developed symptoms, which are NEW and/or UNUSUAL for you, WITH or WITHOUT a fever, please notify your supervisor before reporting to work.

In addition, it is very important that you are truthful when answering the screening questions. Failure to answer them truthfully could cause a co-worker, or resident to become ill with COVID, and if the misrepresentation is confirmed, will result in termination.

We really appreciate your on-going commitment to Good Shepherd-thanks for all you do!

Sincerely,

Linda Parke
Director of Human Resources

Answering Common Questions About COVID-19 Vaccines

Based on [recommendations](#) from the [Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices \(ACIP\)](#), an independent panel of medical and public health experts, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that both healthcare personnel (HCP) and residents of long-term care facilities (LTCFs) be included among those offered the first supply of COVID-19 vaccines.

You are on the front lines and risk being exposed to COVID-19 each day on the job. Early vaccination can protect not only you from getting sick, but also help protect residents and your family members who may have underlying health conditions that put them at risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

Q. Why is it important that LTCF staff receives COVID-19 vaccine, even if LTCF residents are vaccinated?

Receiving a COVID-19 vaccine is an important step to prevent getting sick with COVID-19 disease. HCP, including LTCF staff, were placed first in line to receive COVID-19 vaccine because of their essential role in fighting this deadly pandemic **and** their increased risk of getting COVID-19 and spreading it to their patients.

The decision to get vaccinated protects more than just your health. It can also help protect your colleagues, facility residents, families, and communities.

Q. Will I still need to wear masks, gowns, or personal protective equipment in the facility after receiving COVID-19 vaccination?

Yes. COVID-19 vaccines will be an important tool to help stop the pandemic. However, staff members who have been vaccinated should continue to follow all [current guidance](#) to protect themselves and others, including proper use of [personal protective equipment](#). Because we need to use all the prevention tools available, you should continue to cover your nose and mouth with a [mask](#) when around others, avoid [close contact](#) with people who are sick, [stay 6 feet away from others](#), avoid crowds, and [clean your hands](#) often.

The combination of getting vaccinated and following CDC's recommendations to [protect yourself and others](#) will offer the best protection from COVID-19.

Q. Are COVID-19 vaccines being held to the same safety standards as other vaccines in the United States?

Yes. COVID-19 vaccines are being held to the same safety standards as all other vaccines. Several expert and independent groups evaluate the safety of vaccines being given to people in the United States. After a review of all the available information, CDC and [ACIP](#) agree that the lifesaving benefits of vaccinating LTCF residents against COVID-19 outweigh the possible risks.

Q. Can I feel confident that COVID-19 vaccines are safe?

Yes. The safety of COVID-19 vaccines is a top priority. COVID-19 vaccines are being held to the same safety standards as all other vaccines. All COVID-19 vaccines being administered to LTCF staff and residents were tested in clinical trials involving tens of thousands of people to make sure they meet safety standards and protect adults of different ages, races, and ethnicities. There were no serious safety concerns. CDC and the FDA will keep monitoring the vaccines to look for safety issues after they are authorized and in use.



Q. Will I experience side effects after I get the COVID-19 vaccine?

There may be side effects after getting the COVID-19 vaccination, but they should go away within a few days. Possible side effects include a sore arm, headache, fever, or body aches. This does not mean you have COVID-19. Side effects are signs that the vaccine is working to build immunity. Call your healthcare provider if they don't go away in a week or you have more serious symptoms.

For LTCFs CDC will work with pharmacies and other partners to report possible side effects (called "adverse events") to the [Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System \(VAERS\)](#). You and your coworkers are also encouraged to report any adverse events immediately.

After receiving the vaccine, staff is encouraged to [enroll in v-safe](#). This is a smartphone tool you can use to tell CDC if you have any side effects after getting a COVID-19 vaccine. If you report serious side effects, someone from CDC will call to follow up.

Q. Should I be concerned about side effects that may develop following COVID-19 vaccination, and will I need to miss work?

It can be hard to tell the difference between side effects from the vaccine and symptoms that you could have if you were infected with COVID-19. Your side effects from the vaccine could be mistaken for having COVID-19. So, it will be important to know the difference between the symptoms:

Symptoms that **CAN** occur after either COVID-19 vaccination or infection include:

- Fever, fatigue, headache, chills, muscles aches, and joint pain

Symptoms **NOT** likely to be from the COVID-19 vaccination (and you should look out for) include:

- Cough, shortness of breath, runny nose, sore throat, or loss of taste or smell. These are not the typical symptoms from a COVID-19 vaccination. They could be symptoms of COVID-19 or another infection. Talk to your facility leadership about staying home from work.

Your facility administrator and clinical leadership should have [a plan for helping staff manage symptoms](#) that may occur after receiving COVID-19 vaccination.

Q. What happens if multiple staff members are out at the same time because of side effects after COVID-19 vaccination?

We understand your concerns about potential workforce shortages resulting from vaccine side effects. LTCF administrators may consider staggered administration, so that not all staff members are vaccinated on the same day. For example, facilities may have half of the staff vaccinated at the first on-site federal [Pharmacy Partnership for LTC Program](#) clinic day and the other half vaccinated at a second on-site clinic day or in the community at health department clinics run according to your jurisdiction's plan to vaccinate HCP. LTCF staff members who are not present for any on-site vaccination clinics are encouraged to get vaccinated at another location in the community. There will be no cost associated with COVID-19 vaccine for recipients, no matter where you get vaccinated.

Q. What if I receive the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine at my facility's on-site clinic, but then miss the clinic for the second dose? How do I finish the vaccine series?

Two shots are needed to provide the best protection against COVID-19, and the shots are given a few weeks apart. The first shot starts building protection, but people need a second shot a few weeks later to get the most protection the vaccine can offer.

Every person who receives a COVID-19 vaccine will also receive a vaccination record card that indicates the date the first dose was administered and which vaccine they received. If you receive the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine at your LTCF but are not there to receive the second dose, you may bring the vaccination record card to another provider in your area to complete the vaccine series. Your facility may also work with pharmacy partners to arrange for staff to be at the facility during future clinics, but this will vary across facilities.

