



August 31, 2021

To All Staff:

**Given the reduced frequency of positive tests results, we will be changing the frequency of these letters to monthly unless something occurs which requires an immediate update, such as a positive test or significant change in policy. Letters will be issued the last week of each month.**

## TESTING

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

### *Staff Testing 7/31/21-8/31/21*

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

#### *GSFH:*

- 8/17/21: An unvaccinated employee who works in our Skilled Nursing Facility tested positive for COVID-19. The staff member was symptomatic and self-isolated for 14 days; 15 residents were identified as close contacts.
- 8/26/21: A per diem employee in SNF tested positive for COVID-19. The employee had been symptomatic for 10 days starting on 8/17 but had not worked in the building since July 2021. Contract tracing completed, no other staff or residents had any exposure. We did not do a broadcast for this given the time lags between the last day worked, onset of symptoms, and the positive test.

#### *Chase :*

- 7/31/21: An unvaccinated employee in the nursing department tested positive for COVID19. The employee self-isolated for 14 days. No staff were considered to be a close contact and no residents were considered to be in close contact.
- 8/7/21: A fully vaccinated employee in the nursing department tested positive for COVID19 on 8/7/21, the employee self-isolated for 14 days. There were four resident close contacts.
- 8/8/21: Four other nursing staff members tested positive on 8/8/21. Of the four, three were fully vaccinated, and one was partially vaccinated. The employees self-isolated for 14 days. 10 residents and 1 staff member were considered close contacts of one of these staff members.
- 8/9/21: Four of our employees in the nursing department tested positive for COVID-19, as well as one employee in Environmental Services. The employees are all symptomatic. Of the five, four had been fully vaccinated, and one was unvaccinated. The employees will self-isolate for 14 days. There were two staff members in close contact, and five residents.
- 8/10/21: One of our employees in the Environmental Services department tested positive for COVID-19. The employee was symptomatic, and had not been vaccinated. The employee self-isolated for 14 days. There was one resident and no staff members in close contact.
- 8/11/21: Two CNAs tested positive for COVID-19. Both were symptomatic. One was fully vaccinated and one was not vaccinated. One staff member was a close contact and no residents were.

- 8/12/21: One employee in Environmental Services tested positive. The employee was symptomatic. The staff member had just recently received the J&J shot. The employees self-isolated for 14 days. There were two staff members in close contact, but no residents.

*GSVE:*

- 8/9/21: An employee who works in the Assisted Living Residence tested positive for COVID-19. The staff member was unvaccinated, symptomatic and self-isolated for 14 days. No staff or residents were identified as close contacts.
- 8/25/21: A staff member in Assisted Living tested positive for COVID-19. The employee was unvaccinated. No residents were considered close contacts and two staff members were considered close contacts.
- 8/26/21: A staff member in SNF tested positive for COVID-19, this staff member was fully vaccinated. There were six residents and six staff members considered close contacts, all residents and five staff members are fully vaccinated.
- 8/27/21: A staff member from SNF tested positive, this staff member is fully vaccinated. There were no close contacts.

### ***Resident Testing 7/31/21-8/31/21***

*GSFH:* No new positive test results

*Chase:*

- 8/8/21: We tested all of our residents for COVID-19 due to the staff members testing positive, and eight residents tested positive. All eight had been vaccinated. Three residents experienced mild symptoms and the others were asymptomatic.
- 8/11/21: One of our residents who was symptomatic and fully vaccinated tested positive.

*GSVE:* No new resident test results.

### ***COVID related Deaths 7/31/21-8/31/21***

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

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

*Chase:* On 8/17/21, we reported with deep sadness that we lost a resident who tested positive for COVID-19.

### **NYS DOH Mandatory Testing for all Staff (Reminder)**

**GSC continues to follow the NYS guidance based on County positivity rates and require testing for non-vaccinated personnel in SNF once per week with no routine testing in ACF.**

Testing will be available as follows:

**Chase:** Thursdays 6-8A and 1-4P

**GSVE:** POC Testing will be available through the HR Wellness office (Britnee) Tuesday and Thursday from 2:30-3:30 pm.

**GSFH:** POC Testing will be available in Teresa Cole's office Mon-Fri 1:30p-3:30p, and arrangements have been made for the House Charge Nurse to test the night shift employees.

Testing will continue for any staff or residents who have signs or symptoms of COVID-19 or upon identification of any single new COVID-19 case in SNF, all staff and residents will be tested immediately and per CMS guidelines.

**If you miss the required 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.

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.

### 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. This represents the period from 8/11/21-8/24/21.

County	Tests in prior 14 days	14-day test rate	Percent Positivity in prior 14 days	Test Positivity Classification - 14 days
Broome County, NY	11,798	6,194	6.3%	Yellow
Chenango County, NY	2,386	5,054	7.2%	Yellow

**Current Vaccination Statistics:** Please note these figures are very fluid as we have new admissions, discharges, new hires, terminated employees, etc. We are holding regular vaccine clinics to allow new residents and staff to get vaccinated, as well as people who may have changed their minds since previous clinics.

Vaccination Status as of 8/31/21					
	SNF Residents	ACF Residents	SNF Employees	ACF Employees	IL Employees
GSFH	100% on Cameo Court & 93% on Rehab	100%	69%	70%	n/a
GSVE	100%	100%	89%	60%	88%
Chase	95%	n/a	67% fully and 7% partially	n/a	n/a

### NYS Mandated COVID Vaccination for Health Care Workers

On 8/26/21, NYS’s Public Health and Health Planning Council (PHHPC) reviewed and approved an **emergency regulation requiring health care personnel in most health care settings to be vaccinated against COVID-19**. This includes all healthcare workers in New York State, including staff at hospitals and long-term care facilities (LTCF), including nursing homes, adult care, and other congregate care settings. **The deadline for nursing homes and hospitals is Monday, September 27, 2021 (first dose), and Thursday, October 7 for all other covered providers.** There are limited exceptions for those with medical reasons. The regulation approved by the PHHPC was not identical to the one initially posted – notably, the revised regulation does not include a religious exemption.

President Biden has also indicated that, in the near future, **mandatory vaccinations for healthcare workers will be a requirement for participation in the Medicare and Medicaid programs**. This will impact not only long term care providers such as nursing homes and adult care facilities, but the majority of other providers that hire RNs, LPNs and Aides, such as physician’s offices. We anticipate that all providers will choose to comply with this requirement so as to continue to be able to participate in these programs.

Good Shepherd Communities and all our facilities are in the process of drafting policies to reflect these new requirements, as well as putting processes in place for consideration of requests for accommodations.

Any employee of GSC or any of our affiliates who has not received at least an initial shot of the vaccine by the appropriate deadline cannot continue to work unless they have qualified for an accommodation, and requests for accommodations will be reviewed in-depth and are not automatically assumed to be approved. For SNF employees, the deadline is 9/27/21, and for all others it is 10/7/21.

We have tried working with staff throughout the year to address vaccine hesitancy, and to encourage more of our staff to get the vaccine. We understand that vaccine hesitancy can have many sources, and have tried to provide resources addressing each of these. **But Good Shepherd must comply with the NYS-regulation.** This means that regardless of position or facility, unless a staff member qualifies for a medical accommodation or receives the first dose of the vaccine, they can no longer work for any of our facilities after the deadline.

We will be holding group sessions at each campus in the next week or so with health care providers such as the Medical Director, Nurse Practitioner and HR RNs to address the science behind the vaccine and any health concerns you may have (details to be announced soon).

In the next week, we will also be providing forms to request a medical accommodation, as well as more information on how that process will work. This form will require a physician's certification. Employees requesting an exemption from this policy due to a medical reason must submit this form to the human resources department to begin the interactive accommodation process as soon as possible. Accommodations will be granted only where they do not cause Good Shepherd Communities or any of our affiliates undue hardship or pose a direct threat to the health and safety of others.

**We sincerely hope to work with each of our staff to overcome any vaccine hesitancy or to understand their need for an accommodation, and to maintain each and every one of our valuable team members.**

We will be offering more vaccination clinics in the next few weeks, and reaching out staff individually to discuss their intentions or concerns.

#### **Booster Shots (source CDC Website updated 8/20/21)**

*The US Department of Health and Human Services announced a plan to begin offering COVID-19 vaccine booster shots this fall. CDC's independent advisory committee, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, will continue to meet and discuss data on the evolution of the pandemic and the use of COVID-19 vaccines. ACIP will make further recommendations on the use of boosters for the public after a thorough review of the evidence.*

*When can I get a COVID-19 vaccine booster?*

*Not immediately. The goal is for people to start receiving a COVID-19 booster shot beginning in the fall, with individuals being eligible starting 8 months after they received their second dose of an mRNA vaccine (either Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna). This is subject to authorization by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and recommendation by CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP). FDA is conducting an independent evaluation to determine the safety and effectiveness of a booster dose of the mRNA vaccines. ACIP will decide whether to issue a booster dose recommendation based on a thorough review of the evidence.*

*Who will be the first people to get a booster dose?*

*If FDA authorizes and ACIP recommends a booster dose, the goal is for the first people eligible for a booster dose to be those who were the first to receive a COVID-19 vaccination (those who are most at risk). This includes healthcare providers, residents of long-term care facilities, and other older adults.*

*Why is the United States waiting to start offering COVID-19 vaccine boosters?*

*The COVID-19 vaccines authorized in the United States continue to be highly effective in reducing risk of severe disease, hospitalization, and death, even against the widely circulating Delta variant. However, COVID-19 constantly evolves. Experts are looking at all available data to understand how well the vaccines are working, including how new variants, like Delta, affect vaccine effectiveness. If FDA authorizes and ACIP recommends it, the goal is for people to start receiving a COVID-19 booster shot this fall.*

*Can people who received Johnson & Johnson's Janssen (J&J/Janssen) COVID-19 Vaccine get a booster dose of an mRNA vaccine?*

*No, there aren't enough data currently to support getting an mRNA vaccine dose (either Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna) if someone has previously gotten a J&J/Janssen vaccine. People who got the J&J/Janssen vaccine will likely need a booster dose of the J&J/Janssen vaccine, and more data are expected in the coming weeks. With those data in hand, CDC will keep the public informed with a timely plan for J&J/Janssen booster shots.*

*Will people who received Johnson & Johnson's Janssen (J&J/Janssen) COVID-19 Vaccine need a booster shot?*

*It is likely that people who received a J&J COVID-19 vaccine will need a booster dose. Because the J&J/Janssen vaccine wasn't given in the United States until 70 days after the first mRNA vaccine doses (Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna), the data needed to make this decision aren't available yet. These data are expected in the coming weeks. With those data in hand, CDC will keep the public informed with a timely plan for J&J/Janssen booster shots.*

*If we need a booster dose, does that mean that the vaccines aren't working?*

*No. COVID-19 vaccines are working very well to prevent severe illness, hospitalization, and death, even against the widely circulating Delta variant. However, with the Delta variant, public health experts are starting to see reduced protection against mild and moderate disease. For that reason, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is planning for a booster shot so vaccinated people maintain protection over the coming months.*

*What's the difference between a booster dose and an additional dose?*

*Sometimes people who are moderately to severely immunocompromised do not build enough (or any) protection when they first get a vaccination. When this happens, getting another dose of the vaccine can sometimes help them build more protection against the disease. This appears to be the case for some immunocompromised people and COVID-19 vaccines. CDC recommends moderately to severely immunocompromised people consider receiving an additional (third) dose of an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine (Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna) at least 28 days after the completion of the initial 2-dose mRNA COVID-19 vaccine series.*

*In contrast, a "booster dose" refers to another dose of a vaccine that is given to someone who built enough protection after vaccination, but then that protection decreased over time (this is called waning immunity). HHS has developed a plan to begin offering COVID-19 booster shots to people this fall. Implementation of the plan is subject to FDA's authorization and ACIP's recommendation.*

Current guidance is that the Booster Shot should *preferably* be the same vaccine people initially received. Our provider, The Medicine Shoppe has access to the Moderna and J&J vaccine, but not to the Pfizer. At all of our GSC facilities, most staff initially received the Pfizer through a federal partnership program. When boosters are recommended, these individuals may have to seek the shots elsewhere. Fortunately, there are many community providers with access to this vaccine. We will update everyone as more information becomes available regarding the boosters shots, and what we can make available on-site.

### **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