



March 3, 2021

To All Staff:

**TESTING**

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

Testing Tracker: Summary of Employees & Residents Diagnostic Testing								
Employees	To date (since pandemic start)				New Suspected Cases			
	Employees tested	Tests Pending	Employees Positive	Employees Negative	Employees tested	Tests Pending	Employees Positive	Employees Negative
Chase	21	0	4	17	1	0	0	1
GSFH	30	0	8	21 and 1 inconclusive	0	0	0	0
GSVE	25	0	5	20	0	0	0	0
Residents	To date (since pandemic start)				New Suspected Cases			
Residents tested	Tests Pending	Residents Positive	Residents Negative	Residents tested	Tests Pending	Residents Positive	Residents Negative	
Chase	20	0	2	18	5	0	0	5
GSFH	114	0	12	102	5	0	0	5
GSVE	53	0	2	51	0	0	0	0
Tested as of 2/23/20					2/24/21-3/2/21			
Please note some testing was purely precautionary as the individual was asymptomatic. Ex: fall led to ER visit and tested.								

Please note the chart above is for testing conducted for cause only. At this time, it does not include the mass staff weekly testing discussed below, resident exposure testing, resident mass testing or staff testing done as part of any pre-op procedures.

**Mass Testing**

Mass Resident Testing				
	Tested	Positive	Negative	Pending, Inconclusive or Indeterminate
GSFH	0	0	22 pending from last report were negative	0
GSVE	30	0	30	0
Chase	0	0	0	0

**NYS DOH Mandatory Testing for all Staff: Results of week of 2/24/21-3/2/2021:**

*Staff Testing*

<b>Mass Employee Testing</b>				
	Tested	Positive	Negative	Pending, Inconclusive or Indeterminate
GSFH	332	0	332 tested in current testing week all neg; additional 339 that were pending are also negative*	0
GSVE	270	2 repeat positives	268	0
Chase	143	0	143 and an additional 73 that were pending but not previously reported as such were all neg*	0

\*Note: due to recent weather related delays we experienced an unprecedented number of pending tests for longer than normal. There are no further pending results.

### **Staff Testing 2/24/21-3/2/21**

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*: No new positive test results

***Resident Testing 2/24/21-3/2/21***: Please note the narrative below includes **all positive test results**, including results of required resident mass testing. Therefore it may not correspond with the table above, which represents only those tested for cause.

*GSFH*: No new positive test results

*Chase*: No new positive test results.

*GSVE*: No new positive tests results.

### **COVID related Deaths 2/24/21-3/2/21**

*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**
  - At this point, all three of our campuses have had their first and second vaccine clinics for staff and residents. In Broome County (GSFH and GSVE), NYS through the local health department will supply vaccines for new residents, and we are partnering with our Long Term Care pharmacy, the Medicine Shoppe, to administer these vaccines. Chenango County (Chase) should be added to this program in the coming weeks.
- **Independent Living**
  - **The Medicine Shoppe, our Long Term Care Pharmacy has offered clinics for our IL residents.**
    - *GSFH*: Friday 1/22/21. All apartment residents who elected to receive the vaccine received the vaccine.

- **GSVE: Great news: The second round of vaccines was administered last Friday (2/26/21),** and an additional 27 IL residents received their first dose. Their next dose will be scheduled in 4 weeks. There is no cost for the vaccine.
  - 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), 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. Chenango County (Chase) should be added to this program in the coming weeks.
  - 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.**

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

Per the DOH guidelines for mandatory twice per week testing, the week runs from **Wednesday-Tuesday**. The new week starts today, Wednesday, March 3, which will run March 3-9. 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 Order of twice per week testing.**

The testing times for each campus will be as follows next week will vary significantly due to the holiday:

<u>GSFH</u>		<u>GSVE</u>		<u>Chase</u>
Tuesday	2-4pm	Monday	2-4pm	Monday 6-8am & 1-4pm
Wednesday	7-9am & 2-4pm	Tuesday	2-4pm	Thursday 6-8am & 1-4pm
Thursday	2-4pm	Wednesday	2-4pm	
Friday	7-9am	Friday	2-4pm	

**If you miss the twice per week 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 twice per week testing requirements, and any non-compliance among our employees can result in the facility itself being penalized. We have eliminated the earlier requirement that we receive a negative test result prior to return in recognition that testing results are now taking an extended time.

**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.

### **NYS Quarantine Travel Restrictions**

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo announced guidelines In November allowing out-of-state travelers to New York to “test out” of the mandatory 14-day quarantine. Travelers from states (Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Connecticut) that are contiguous with New York will continue to be exempt from the travel advisory. **Essential workers will continue to be exempt as well.**

Per NYS, if you travel to a prohibited area, you are required to self-quarantine. You must obtain a COVID-19 test within 24 hours of your return to NYS. You may report to work but are required to self-quarantine when not at work. On day 4 you must obtain a second COVID-19 test and receive negative results before exiting quarantine outside of work. GSC has determined the period while you await your results is not eligible to quarantine pay and you may not use benefit time. If you do decide to travel to a restricted zone, you should carefully consider the availability of testing upon your return, and the average length of time people are waiting for their results – 5+ days unless you have access to the rapid response testing which is not widely available.

In addition, if you do become ill, NYS COVID pay is not available per NYS guidelines because you have traveled to a high risk area as defined by NYS.

**We are highly recommending for the health and welfare of our residents and staff members that you adhere to the travel restrictions.** We understand this may mean canceling vacations or missing important life events, and know how difficult these decisions can be. 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.

For people outside the nursing home guidelines the following applies:

New guidelines allowing out-of-state travelers to New York to “test out” of the mandatory 14-day quarantine. Travelers from states that are contiguous with New York will continue to be exempt from the travel advisory; however, covered travelers must continue to fill out the [Traveler Health Form](#).

For any traveler to New York State from out of state, exempting the contiguous states, the new guidelines for travelers to test-out of the mandatory 14-day quarantine are below:

- For travelers who were in another state for more than 24 hours:
  - Travelers must obtain a test within three days of departure from that state.
  - The traveler must, upon arrival in New York, quarantine for three days.
  - On day 4 of their quarantine, the traveler must obtain seek another COVID-19 test. If both tests come back negative, the traveler may exit quarantine early upon receipt of the second negative diagnostic test.
- For travelers who were in another state for less than 24 hours:
  - The traveler does not need a test prior to their departure from the other state, and does not need to quarantine upon arrival in New York State.
  - However, the traveler must fill out the traveler information form upon entry into New York State, and take a COVID-19 diagnostic test 4 days after their arrival in New York.

Local health departments will validate tests, if necessary, and if a test comes back positive, will issue isolation orders and initiate contact tracing. The local health department must make contact with the state the traveler came from, to ensure contact tracing proceeds there as well. All travelers must continue to fill out the traveler information form upon arrival.

### **COVID-19 Vaccines and Mammograms**

The following is for information only, and should not be interpreted as medical advice.

The [Society of Breast Imaging \(SBI\) recently recommended](#) that patients try to reschedule their mammograms around when they receive the Covid-19 vaccine, due to a potential side effect of the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines that causes swollen lymph nodes in the armpits, which some women mistook as a sign of breast cancer. These swollen lymph nodes, which are a side effect of the COVID-19 vaccine, can also show up in mammograms and other types of imaging scans, experts say.

Lymph nodes are specialized tissue in the body's immune system that contains white blood cells and help fight against infection and disease, according to the National Cancer Institute. There are found all over the body but the most prominent lymph nodes are located in the armpits, neck and groin area. The ones located under the armpits are most likely to swell after vaccination because they're closest to the injection site. They could occur as soon as a few days after vaccination and

could last as long as 12 weeks. Health experts emphasize this is completely normal as increased inflammation suggests antibodies are at work protecting the body against SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19.

In order to ensure proper management of individuals undergoing breast imaging during the pandemic, the Society of Breast Imaging offered the following guidance:

- “If possible, and when it does not unduly delay care, consider scheduling screening exams prior to the first dose of a Covid-19 vaccination or 4-6 weeks following the second dose of a Covid-19 vaccination.”

**If you have symptoms such as a lump, or any changes in their breast or armpit area, you should contact your health care provider regardless of your vaccine status, and you should not delay or reschedule a mammogram without consulting with your provider.**

**Aegis Lab**

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.synergypay.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**

While we our facilities continue to provide quality care to all of our residents, we want to be completely transparent about some of the challenges we are facing. Each campus has had and continues to have employees who have either tested positive for COVID-19 or have had close contacts, and are therefore furloughed for a minimum of 14 days. This will obviously create staffing challenges. The following summarizes the currently furloughed staff members at each facility:

Furloughed Staff					
	Nursing	Env Service	Dietary	ACF	Other
GSFH	0	1	0	0	0
GSVE	0	0	0	0	1
Chase	1	0	0	0	0

**Positivity Rates and COVID Zones**

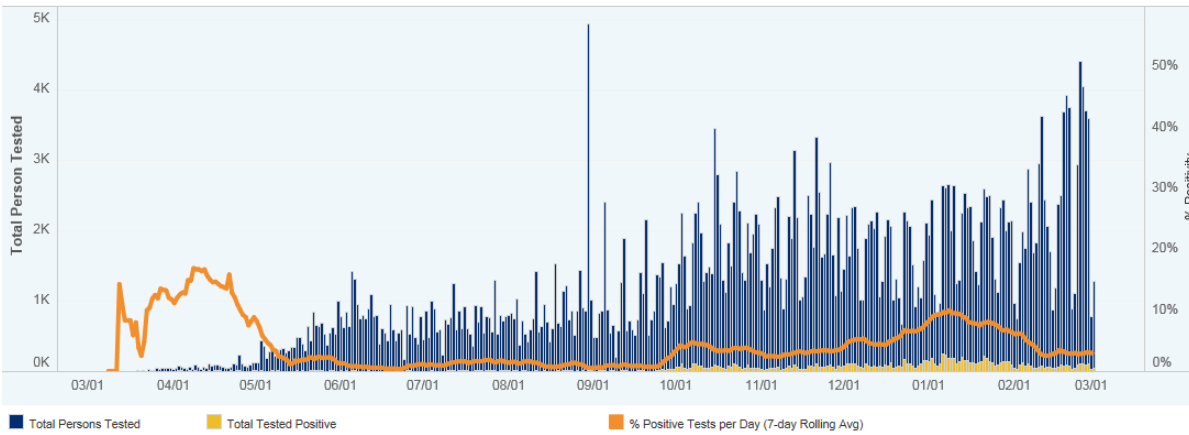
NYS reports on COVID-19 Positivity Rates by County and also on COVID-19 Cluster Spots. Each week, we will include the most recent info. Increasing positivity can impact all businesses, and for nursing homes can mean increased requirements for employee testing. Per CMS guidelines:

**Table 2: Routine Testing Intervals Vary by Community COVID-19 Activity Level**

Community COVID-19 Activity	County Positivity Rate in the past week	Minimum Testing Frequency
Low	<5%	Once a month
Medium	5% - 10%	Once a week*
High	>10%	Twice a week*

\*This frequency presumes availability of Point of Care testing on-site at the nursing home or where off-site testing turnaround time is <48 hours.

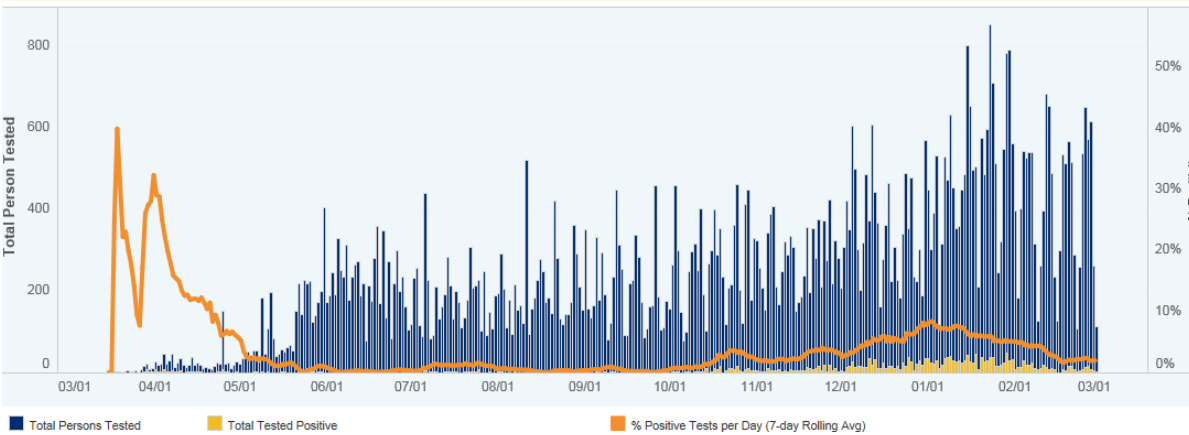
**% Positive Results Over Time - Broome**



**Test Results - Yesterday**

		Total Persons Tested	Total Tested Positive	% Positive, Yesterday	% Positive, 7-day Avg
Southern Tier	Broome	1,232	43	3.5%	3.0%

**% Positive Results Over Time - Chenango**



**Test Results - Yesterday**

		Total Persons Tested	Total Tested Positive	% Positive, Yesterday	% Positive, 7-day Avg
Southern Tier	Chenango	109	4	3.7%	2.0%

Currently, none of our facilities are in a COVID 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. 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