



November 19, 2020

To All Staff:

**Status Update**

Each week we will provide you with updated information on COVID-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	13	0	0	13	0	0	0	0	
GSFH	14	0	3	10 and 1 inconclusive	1	0	0	1	
GSVE	18	0	3	15	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	Residents Negative	
Chase	14	0	0	14	0	0	0	0	
GSFH	46	0	8	38	10	0	0	10	
GSVE	31	0	1	30	3	0	0	3	
Tested as of 11/11/20				11/12/20-11/18/20					
Please note some testing was purely precautionary as the individual was asymptomatic. Ex: fall led to ER visit and tested.									
At GSVE, 3 SNF residents identified through mass testing and are not included above but are in the narrative section below									

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, or staff testing done as part of any pre-op procedures.

**NYS DOH Mandatory Testing for all Staff: Results of week of 11/12/20-11/18/20:**

**Mass Testing**

	Tested	Positive	Negative	Inconclusive or Indeterminate
GSFH	169	0	169	0
GSVE	140	1	139	0
Chase	110	0	110	0

**Staff Testing 11/12/20-11/18/20**

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

*GSFH*: No new positive staff results

*GSVE*:

11/15/20

- An employee in administration tested positive for COVID-19. The staff member had mild symptoms and will self-isolate for 14 days. One staff member was identified as being in close contact and will self-isolate for 14 days.

Chase: No new positive staff results.

**Resident Testing 11/12/20-11/18/20**

GSFH: No new positive resident tests.

Chase: No new positive resident tests.

GSVE:

11/12/20

- Two SNF residents tested positive for COVID-19. Both are asymptomatic. No staff or residents were identified as close contacts. All staff is utilizing full PPE for contact/droplet precautions including the use of N95 respirator masks.

11/14/20

- A Skilled Nursing resident *tested positive for COVID-19*. The resident had mild symptoms. We will continue with our mass testing of residents and staff per the CMS testing guidance. No staff or residents were identified as close contacts. All staff is utilizing full PPE for contact/droplet precautions including the use of N95 respirator masks.

11/16/20

- Two of our residents in Independent Living in the apartments have tested positive for COVID-19. The residents were symptomatic and the residents will self-isolate for 14 days. Two other IL residents were identified as close contacts. The two residents who were close contacts have been notified and will monitor for symptoms and self-isolate for 14 days. Given the increasing prevalence of COVID-19 in our local community, and this incident, in an abundance of caution, GSVE canceled all group activities, closed the Fitness Center and returned to delivery only dining for a period of 14 days. We will use technology to continue Fitness classes on Village TV. At this point, we will also continue to operate the Beauty Shop with the current restrictions in place.

We continue to have a daily monitoring system to monitor all residents for signs/symptoms of COVID-19, as well as our daily screening for all staff.

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

Per the DOH guidelines for mandatory testing, the week runs from **Wednesday-Tuesday**. We are now in the week of November 18-24. A new week will start on November 25, which will run to November 25- December 1. When scheduling or planning your appointment to be tested, please keep the week dates in mind in order to be in compliance with the Executive Order. The Executive Order was extending through December 3, 2020. We will keep you posted on any updates.

Last week, we had indicated testing at GSFH would be twice weekly effective 11/17/20 because it was located in a yellow zone, and NYS requires twice weekly testing in that designation. Yesterday, that designation was removed for Broome County, so GSFH will be conducting weekly testing.

The testing times for each campus will be as follows:

<u>GSFH</u>		<u>GSVE</u>		<u>Chase</u>	
Tuesday	2-4pm	Monday	2-4pm	Monday	5-8am & 1-4pm
Wednesday	7-9am	Tuesday	2-4pm	Tuesday	5-8am & 1-4pm
Thursday	2-4pm	Wednesday	2-4pm	Wednesday	5-8am & 1-4pm
Friday	7-9am	Friday	2-4pm		

Please note, due to the Thanksgiving holiday, the testing day for GSFH on Thursday November 26, will be moved to Monday, November 30 from 2-4 pm.

**If you miss the weekly test, 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 weekly 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. **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 new guidelines 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. The new protocol is effective Wednesday, November 4.

**Per NYS, if you travel to a prohibited area, you cannot return without providing the results of a negative test conducted within 24 hours of your return to NYS.** 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 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 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 into New York State to contribute to New York State's robust contact tracing program.

### **Microcluster Update**

Yesterday, Broome County was [removed from the state's "yellow zone" designation](#) after parts of some municipalities spent more than a month under enhanced COVID-19 restrictions. Among the [areas of Broome County that were included in the yellow zone](#) were parts of Binghamton (including Good Shepherd Fairview Home), Johnson City, Endicott, Endwell, and parts of the towns of Union and Conklin. Those areas were grouped in that yellow cluster because they had a significantly higher positivity rate of COVID-19 cases compared to elsewhere in the county. Because areas within the yellow zone saw a reduced positivity rate, the state removed the yellow zone designation.

### **COVID Impact and Employee Health Insurance**

In previous letters we have reviewed the financial impact of COVID on all of our facilities. Purchasing PPEs, testing, enhanced infection control measures and equipment, as well as the "We Care" differential and the COVID Positive Unit pay have all effected the 2020 expense budget. And our budgeted revenue has also been impacted; census is down at all our campuses year to date. Many people postponed any elective procedures which mean less rehab residents. Other are simply hesitant to enter any congregate living setting. We have even seen a number of residents in Independent Living at GSVE decide to leave our community to relocate with their families. The scale of this is unprecedented. All these factors led to a very tense 2021 budget planning process.

The COVID impact will continue into 2021. In preparing the 2021 budget, we knew we were facing many unknowns, including whether insurance companies would continue to cover the required COVID testing for staff. We will be communicating on the 2021 budget more comprehensively in the near future but did want to let you know that as we reviewed our health insurance options, our goals were to keep the health insurance affordable for both us as the employer and for you in terms of your premium costs, while continuing to offer both choice and a meaningful benefit to you.

If you have questions during the upcoming open enrollment period starting 11/23 and running through 12/4, please contact your HR department.

### **COVID Symptoms – Reporting to Work**

COVID 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, and 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 deciding if you should report 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.



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

Sincerely,

Linda Parke  
Director of Human Resources