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To All Families of our Skilled Nursing and Adult Care Residents:

**PLEASE READ THE ENTIRE NEWSLETTER FOR IMPORTANT INFORMATION ON COVID. THIS IS THE PRIMARY MEANS OF COMMUNICATION ON THIS TOPIC.**

### **“WELCOME” TO OUR NEW FAMILY CONTACTS**

We are required to notify all residents, families and staff of a facility whenever we have a positive COVID-19 test result for any staff member or resident. Two points of contact are required.

To help us meet these requirements, we have utilized a broadcast tool (School Messenger) to send emails and automated phone calls to up to two email addresses and two phone numbers per resident or resident contact, which is usually the first Health Care Proxy. The system then broadcasts to all the contact phone numbers and emails in this database. We also use this system to send out this update letter to our resident family contacts.

**You will also receive a broadcast when we have a staff member or resident test positive for COVID-19.** This includes an email *and a phone call*. We understand these phone calls can come at inconvenient times and would like to offer you the option to opt out of the phone calls for one or both of the numbers on file *so long as we have an email address on file to receive the alert*. This opt out will only effect the notification databases used by School Messenger. All contact info will remain on file in our Electronic Health Record, PointClickCare.

If you wish to opt out of alerts for one or both phone numbers we have file, please email me at [pm@goodshepherdcommunities.org](mailto:pm@goodshepherdcommunities.org) with the specifics. Please note it will take time to make the changes to the databases, so dependent on volume, there may be a delay from the time you make the request and the time the database revisions are completed. Thank you in advance for your patience.

**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 COVID-19. 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 COVID-19 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.

**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

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. **Help us reach herd immunity!!**

### 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

### 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. The onsite clinics held for our IL residents earlier used the Moderna vaccine, and we will be working with the Medicine Shoppe to schedule booster clinics when the CDC recommends this. We will update everyone as more information becomes available regarding the booster shots.

### **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.

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 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.

But we also realize we may lose some valued staff who may refuse to be vaccinated. At a time when we already struggle to recruit and retain qualified personnel, losing any staff is a grave concern. While GSC completely supports vaccination of all personnel, the impact on staffing cannot be ignored.

### **Masks and Social Distancing in GSVE Independent Living**

We continue to assess the situation to determine if we need to re-implement some of the COVID mitigation strategies we employed earlier in the pandemic. At this time, we will maintain the current status, but this may change over the next few weeks if the County positivity rate climbs further, or if we see increased outbreaks among our staff. We will issue a special notice to our GSVE IL residents if anything is changing. Please be prepared to comply if needed.

We would also encourage you to consider mask use and social distancing when leaving our campus and interacting with the general public.

**FAQs:** We receive multiple individual emails or calls with questions. Rather than respond individually to multiple individuals asking the same or similar questions, we have added a FAQs section each week. Please note we have an obligation to maintain the privacy of the health information of our employees and cannot provide information which could potentially identify them.

*Q: Which of our facilities and level of care currently allow visitors?*

**A: Chase is open for visitation.**

**At GSFH, all units with the exception of Cameo Court are open, and we anticipate Cameo Court re-opening tomorrow.**

**At GSVE, ALR is open for visitation. SNF and SNALR (Memory) are currently closed.**

Because the hours available and locations vary by facility and level of care, we are issuing facility\level of care specific broadcasts to the impacted families with more specific information.

We continue to offer virtual visits, and can arrange for window visits. Both should be scheduled through the Therapeutic Recreation department.

### **Donations**

- At Chase, we received a donation to the nursing department of \$3000 from the family of one of our residents, Christine Button.

Please remember to contact the facility's Administrator prior to making a non-monetary donation so they are aware and they can review any restrictions.



Please visit our website for ongoing coverage of our response to COVID.

Thank you all for your patience during this difficult time. If you are feeling unusually high levels of stress, there are a number of resources available.

- Office of Mental Health Emotional Support Helpline: 1-844-863-9314 \*  
The Emotional Support Helpline provides free and confidential support, helping callers experiencing increased anxiety due to the coronavirus emergency. The Helpline is staffed by volunteers, including mental health professionals, who have received training in crisis counseling.
- CDC Resources : <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html>

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