



February 3, 2021

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. While CMS requires this notice be made by 5 pm of the next day, NYS is more stringent, requiring notice within 24 hours. 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 weekly 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 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.

TESTING

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					New Suspected Cases				
	To date (since pandemic start)								
	Employees tested	Tests Pending	Employees Positive	Employees Negative	Employees tested	Tests Pending	Employees Positive	Employees Negative	
Chase	20	0	4	16	0	0	0	0	0
GSFH	27	0	6	20 and 1 inconclusive	0	0	0	0	0
GSVE	25	0	5	20	0	0	0	0	0
Residents					New Suspected Cases				
	To date (since pandemic start)								
	Residents tested	Tests Pending	Residents Positive	Residents Negative	Residents tested	Tests Pending	Residents Positive	Residents Negative	
Chase	19	0	2	17	0	0	0	0	0
GSFH	88	0	10	78	4	0	0	0	4
GSVE	45	0	2	45	1	0	0	0	1
Tested as of 1/26/20					1/27/21-2/2/21				
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 Resident Testing

Mass Resident Testing				
	Tested	Positive	Negative	Pending, Inconclusive or Indeterminate
GSFH	19	0	19	0
GSVE	19	0	19	0
Chase	9	0	5	4

NYS DOH Mandatory Testing for all Staff: Results of week of 1/27/21-2/2/21:

Mass Staff Testing

Mass Employee Testing				
	Tested	Positive	Negative	Pending, Inconclusive or Indeterminate
GSFH	137	8 repeat positives	126	3
GSVE	306	1	305	0
Chase	265	1	264	0

Staff Testing 1/27/21-2/2/21

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

GSFH

1/29/21

- An employee who works on our first floor Skilled Nursing Facility tested positive for COVID-19. This employee has mild symptoms and will self-isolate for 14 days. No residents or staff were considered close contacts with the positive staff member.

Chase: No new positive tests.

GSVE

2/2/21

- An employee who works in the Nursing department in skilled nursing tested positive for COVID-19. The staff member is asymptomatic and will self-isolate for 14 days. No staff or residents were identified as close contacts.

Resident Testing 1/27/21-2/2/21: 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 tests.

Chase: No new positive tests.

GSVE: No new positive tests.

Resident COVID related Deaths 1/27/21-2/2/21

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

Chase

- One of our residents who had previously tested positive but subsequently tested negative for COVID-19 passed away. Our thoughts are with their families and loved ones.

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

Vaccine News

There seems to be a lot of concerns about the vaccines in terms of safety and effectiveness. But here is some information to address this:

- Per the CDC: All the COVID-19 vaccines being used have gone through rigorous studies to ensure they are as safe as possible. Systems that allow CDC to watch for safety issues are in place across the entire country. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has granted Emergency Use Authorizations for COVID-19 vaccines that have been shown to meet rigorous safety criteria and be effective as determined by data from the manufacturers and findings from large clinical trials. Clinical trials for all vaccines must first show they meet rigorous criteria for safety and effectiveness before any vaccine, including COVID-19 vaccines, can be authorized or approved for use. The known and potential benefits of a COVID-19 vaccine must outweigh the known and potential risks of the vaccine.
- The Moderna and Pfizer vaccines — the only two currently approved in the U.S. — have effectiveness rates of about 95 percent after two doses. That's on par with the vaccines for chickenpox and measles.
- If anything, the 95 percent number underestimates the effectiveness, because it counts anyone who came down with a mild case of COVID-19 as a failure. But turning COVID into a typical flu — as the vaccines evidently did for most of the remaining 5 percent — is actually a success. Of the 32,000 people who received the approved vaccines in a research trial, only one person contracted a severe COVID case.
- The vaccines from Pfizer and Moderna, and the 3 others awaiting authorization for emergency use (AstraZeneca, Novavax and Johnson & Johnson) – are very promising. Of the roughly 75,000 people who have received one of the five in a research trial, not a single person has died from COVID, and only a few people appear to have been hospitalized. None have remained hospitalized 28 days after receiving a shot. Dr. Ashish Jha, the Dean of the Brown University School of Public Health, was quoted in a NY Times article recently: “I don't actually care about infections. I care about hospitalizations and deaths and long-term complications.”
- Regarding the highly contagious new virus variants that have emerged in Britain, Brazil and South Africa, the news is still good. Only the South African variant appears to make the vaccines less effective at eliminating infections. However, there is no evidence yet that this variant impacts the incidence of serious illness or death among vaccinated people.

Vaccination

- **SNF**
 - At this point, all three of our campuses have had their first and second vaccine clinics for all SNF residents.
- **ACF:**
 - GSVE ALR clinic dates: 1/14, 2/4, 2/25
 - GSFH ALR Clinic Dates: 1/13, 2/3, 2/24
- **Independent Living**
 - **The Medicine Shoppe, our Long Term Care Pharmacy has begun to hold for our IL residents.**
 - GSFH: Friday 1/22/21. All apartment residents who elected to receive the vaccine received the vaccine.
 - GSVE: Monday 1/25/21. 71 appointments were available and were scheduled in alphabetic order. A second clinic will be scheduled within the next few weeks as more vaccine becomes available.
 - While there is no cost for the vaccine, we will be gathering all the required paperwork in advance to expedite the day of the clinic, including driver's license, and Medicare cards for each resident. And please remember the vaccine requires two doses 3-4 weeks apart.

- NYS residents over 65 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**
 - ALL staff regardless of department are eligible for the program, with prioritization based on risk. These clinics have begun at all the Campuses
- 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 Mandated Staff Testing

Per NYS, full-time staff are required to be tested twice per week for COVID-19, and those who do not meet the hours requirement must be tested once per week. As the positivity rate in NYS and in our area declines, we anticipate this being reduced to once per week.

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 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 Servic	Dietary	ACF	Other
GSFH	0	0	0	0	1
GSVE	3	1	1	1	2
Chase	2	0	0	0	1

Positivity Rates and COVID Zones

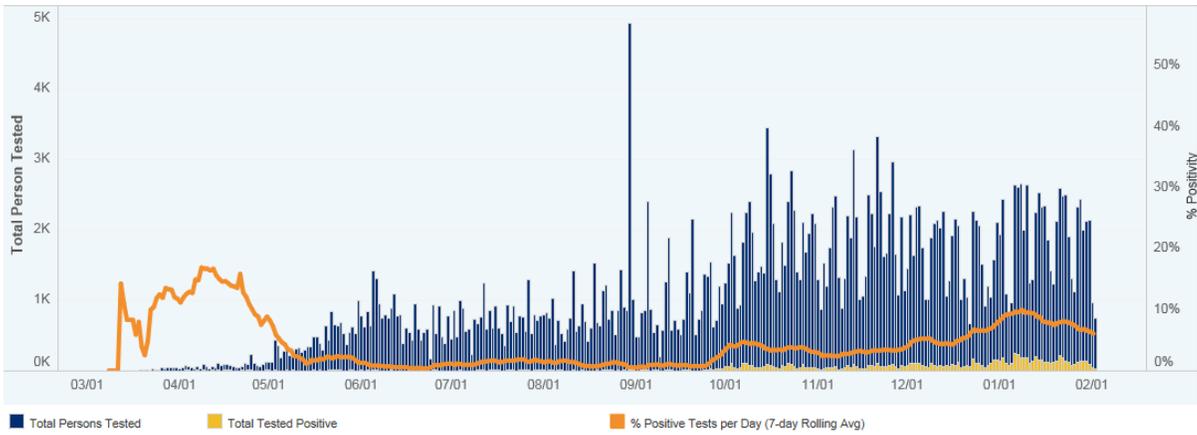
NYS reports on COVID Positivity Rates by County and also on COVID Cluster Spots. Each week, we will include the most recent info. Increasing positivity can impact all businesses. Per CMS guidelines:

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.

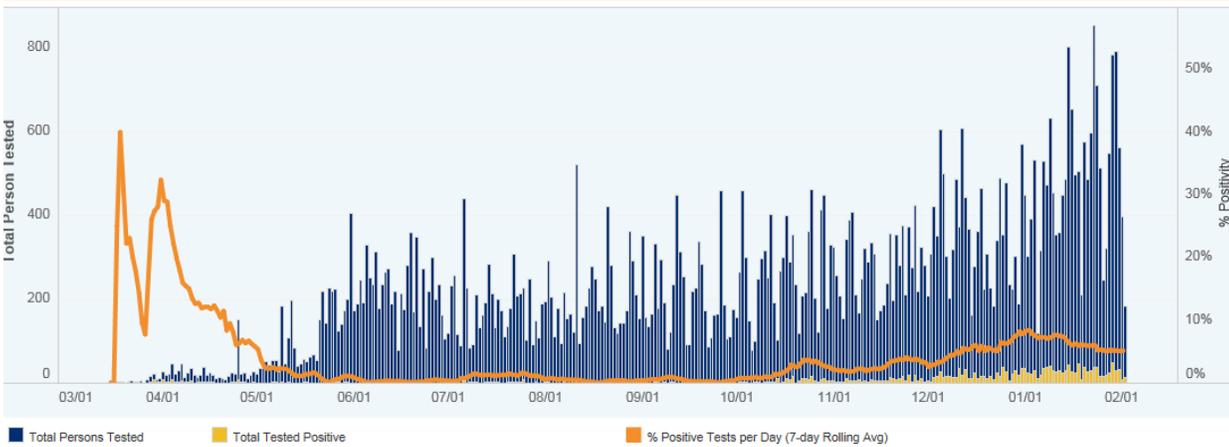
% Positive Results Over Time - Broome



Test Results - Yesterday

		Total Persons Tested	Total Tested Positive	% Positive, Yesterday	% Positive, 7-day Avg
Southern Tier	Broome	709	37	5.2%	6.0%

% Positive Results Over Time - Chenango



Test Results - Yesterday

		Total Persons Tested	Total Tested Positive	% Positive, Yesterday	% Positive, 7-day Avg
Southern Tier	Chenango	171	14	8.2%	5.1%

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

Super Bowl Celebrations: CDC Recommendations

Safer Ways to Enjoy the Super Bowl

Gathering virtually or with the people you live with is the safest way to celebrate the Super Bowl this year. If you do have a small gathering with people who don't live with you, outdoors is safer than indoors. This year, choose a safer way to enjoy the game.

Host a virtual Super Bowl watch party.

- Wear clothing or decorate your home with your favorite team's logo or colors.
- Make appetizers or snacks with the people you live with to enjoy while watching the game and share the recipes with your friends and family.
- Start a text group with other fans to chat about the game while watching.



Attend an outdoor viewing party where viewers can sit 6 feet apart.

- Use a projector screen to broadcast the game.
- Sit at least 6 feet away from people you don't live with.



If you choose to attend the Super Bowl or a large Super Bowl event, like a watch party, follow these steps to make yourself safer:

- Call the venue to ensure that they have steps in place to prevent the spread of the virus.
- Follow signage at the venue to allow for social distancing.
- Arrive to the venue early to avoid crowding and congested areas.

Media Coverage of Nursing Homes

We know there has been increasingly negative media coverage of Nursing Homes and the response to COVID-19. While we will not address the political aspects or speak for any other facilities, we want to assure you that at all the Good Shepherd Communities facilities, the safety and health of our residents and staff have always been the highest priority for our Board of Directors, management team and all our staff. We have made significant capital investments (ex: Lytbots), purchased all required Personal Protective Equipment, tested per NYS guidelines, held vaccination clinics for residents and staff, introduced the “We Care” differential last year, and created wage incentives for COVID-19 positive units. While staffing has been challenging at times due to the difficulty in recruiting staff to Long Term Care in the midst of a pandemic and the impact of furloughed employees, we have also expanded our use of agency personnel, and contracted with travel agencies from out of the area per NYS Department of Health recommendation. Our staff have risen to the occasion at all of our facilities, and performed heroically under very stressful conditions. Please join us in thanking all of them for their sacrifices to protect our residents and each other.

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: Currently, all levels of care at all GSC facilities with the exception of GSVE ALR are required to pause visitation due to recent positive COVID-19 test results.

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.

Also please note that a single positive COVID-19 test at a facility\level of care will result in the Department of Health suspending visitation for another 14 days. COVID-19 prevalence is increasing in NYS. In the event that we must suspend visitation, we will notify any visitors scheduled individually, and then issue a broadcast with more general information.

Please remember the NYS DOH guidelines for visitation for ACFs and SNFs are different in many ways, including how many people can visit at a time and the SNF requirement that visitors present verified negative COVID-19 test results within the last week prior to the visit. If you are concerned about this requirement and the burdens it presents, please reach out to the Governor's office at 1-518-474-8390 to voice your concerns.

Please remember that NYS DOH has very strict guidelines on how we structure our visitations. Social distancing is absolutely required. If visitors do not comply with these guidelines, the visitor will be asked to leave and may not be allowed to return depending on the nature of the violation. These guidelines are for the protection of our residents, and we ask everyone to comply.

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

Donations

- The family of Margaret Bills donated a large assortment of Keurig coffee and cappuccino pods for all staff at GSFH.

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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