



March 17, 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 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-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	23	0	4	19	2	0	0	0	2
GSFH	30	0	8	21 and 1 inconclusive	0	0	0	0	0
GSVE	25	0	5	20	0	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	35	0	2	33	6	0	0	0	6
GSFH	124	0	12	112	5	0	0	0	5
GSVE	58	0	2	56	1	0	0	0	1
Tested as of 3/9/21					3/10/21-3/16/21				
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	0	0	0	0
GSVE	0	0	0	0
Chase	0	0	0	0

NYS DOH Mandatory Testing for all Staff: Results of week of 3/10/21-3/16/21:

Mass Staff Testing

Mass Employee Testing				
	Tested	Positive	Negative	Pending, Inconclusive or Indeterminate
GSFH	313	0	313	0
GSVE	285	0	285	0
Chase	181	0	169+ 29 that were pending from last week	2 inconclusive and 10 pending

Staff Testing 3/10/21-3/16/21

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 3/10/21-3/16/21: 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 3/10/21-3/16/21

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

Chase: We are happy to report there were no COVID related resident deaths at Chase.

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

Vaccination

- **SNF and ACF**
 - In Broome County (GSFH and GSVE) and Chenango County (Chase), NYS through the local health department is supplying vaccines for new residents, and we are partnering with our Long Term Care pharmacy, the Medicine Shoppe, to administer these vaccines.
- **Independent Living**
 - **The Medicine Shoppe, our Long Term Care Pharmacy has offered clinics for our IL residents.**
 - GSFH: All apartment residents who elected to receive the vaccine received the vaccine.
 - GSVE: All IL residents who elected to receive the vaccine have received it.
 - 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) and Chenango County (Chase), 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.

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.



All 6 living US Presidents, both Republicans and Democrats, have now endorsed vaccination against COVID-19, with President Trump being the most recent President to make a direct appeal to the American people to get vaccinated. And all 6 Presidents and First Ladies have received their vaccines. **Vaccination is not a political issue!!**

- **Current Vaccination Statistics:**

Vaccination Status				
	SNF Residents	ACF Residents	SNF Employees	ACF Employees
GSFH	94% Rehab and 96% on Cameo Court	98%	52%	49%
GSVE	100%	96%	80%	53%
Chase	87%	n\a	26%	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!!**

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. Next week we will be alerting staff to new testing guidelines for ACF and IL.

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 create staffing challenges, but at least the situation is improving with fewer employees furloughed than at the height of the local outbreaks. The following summarizes the currently furloughed staff members at each facility:

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

NYS Visitation Guidance

NYSDOH will focus on the county's COVID-19 rate of transmission to determine if nursing home visitation is allowed and if visitors will need to be tested for COVID-19 prior to the visit. The county positivity rate is based on CMS data, rather than NYS generated data. If a visitor tests positive, they will not be allowed to visit.

- County COVID-19 transmission rate less than 5% (CMS rates) - no COVID-19 test required but encouraged by NYSDOH prior to visiting. However, CMS discourages requiring testing or vaccinations under any circumstances, and only encourages it when the County positivity rate exceeds 5%. In an attempt to comply with both these directives, GSC has opted **not** to require COVID testing for visitors when the County rate is <5%.
- County COVID-19 transmission rate between 5% and 10% (CMS Rates)- must be tested for COVID-19 within 72 hours of the visit. Can be a PCR or rapid test.
- County COVID-19 transmission rate greater than 10% (CMS rates)- no visitation allowed except for compassionate care.
- Individuals vaccinated no less than 14 days before the date of the visit and no more than 90 days prior to the visit can provide proof of vaccination in lieu of testing.
- Required tests must be completed within 72 hours prior to the scheduled visit. You can opt to pursue testing in the community prior to the visit: either a PCR or Rapid Antigen test is acceptable.
- You may also choose to be tested at the facility by appointment only (walk-ins are not allowed) Tests must be scheduled within the 72 hours prior to the scheduled visit. Testing at the facility is completed using a Rapid Antigen test via a monitored, self-collected nasal swab. Results are available within 15-30 minutes. Facility testing is currently free of charge. If a visitor tests positive during a facility Rapid Antigen being performed, the visitor will be informed, the visit will not move forward, and the visitor will be directed to contact their community provider for any additional follow-up. All Rapid Antigen test results that have been performed at the facility are required to be reported to the NYS DOH whether it is negative or positive.

Appointments for rapid COVID-19 testing must be made in advance in accordance with each facility's policy.

We are disappointed that the new guidance continues to require visitation to pause if there has been a positive case of COVID-19 within 14 days. We continue to work with our association to encourage NYS to adopt more liberal guidelines.

Positivity Rates and COVID Zones

We will no longer report NYS statistics and instead report the most recent CMS positivity rates by county as this is the metric used for visitation per NYS:

COVID-19 Viral (RT-PCR) Laboratory 14-Day Test Positivity Rates, by US County									
Percent Positive and Tests in prior 14 days:		Data from February 24-March 9							
County	FIPS	State	FEMA Region	Population	NCHS Urban Rural Classification	Tests in prior 14 days	14-day test rate	Percent Positivity in prior 14 days	
Broome County, NY	36007	NY	2	190,488	Small metro	15,751	8,269	5.5%	
Chenango County, NY	36017	NY	2	47,207	Non-core	4,755	10,073	3.0%	

Currently, none of our facilities are in a COVID-19 cluster hot spot.

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: All Levels of Care at all of our campuses have been open for visitation, but yesterday we learned GSFH SNF's Cameo Court will be closing due to an employee testing positive. The Rehab Unit will remain open for visitation. The details involved will be included in next week's letter, but we wanted to provide correct information for today.

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. 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 that NYS DOH has very strict guidelines on how we structure our visitations. Social distancing is absolutely required. **Despite all the heartwarming media coverage of grandparents seeing their grandchildren for the first time since the pandemic restrictions went into effect, the rules for LTC remain more stringent. We continue to advocate for NYS to amend their regulations to more closely align with CMS guidance.**

If visitors do not comply with the current 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

- Donation from the VFW Auxiliary Post 478 on Court Street in Binghamton of several bags of essentials such as socks, undershirts, t-shirts, tank tops, boxers, briefs, ladies underwear, and slippers/ and one bag of knitted items such as scarves and hats for residents at GSFH.
- Bernie Collins and families brought cookies to GSFH SNF on Monday 3/8
- Sheri Peck brought homemade cookies and chocolate coins on 3/8 for GSFH SND

- Peg Smith's family brought in lunches for GSVE ALR.
- Saint Andrews church has been donating flower arrangements to Chase regularly for the duration of the pandemic.

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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