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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 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 Wednesday of each month.**

### **TESTING**

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

We will no longer be presenting the charts for testing for cause and mass testing but will continue to provide narratives for any new positive cases.

#### ***Staff Testing 6/16/21-6/29/21***

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 6/16/21-6/29/21***

*GSFH:* No new positive test results

*Chase:* No new positive test results.

*GSVE:* No new positive tests results.

### **COVID related Deaths 6/16/21-6/29/21**

*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 have received the vaccine.
  - GSVE: All IL residents who elected to receive the vaccine have received it.
  - As of 4/6/21, NYS residents age 16 or older were eligible to be vaccinated. As of 5/12/21, eligibility was expanded to include those 12-15. For those 12-17, the only approved vaccine is the Pfizer vaccine. 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 ended, and we are in 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 have access to the J&J vaccine, so if staff prefer the single shot, we can arrange for it.

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.

**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.

<b>Vaccination Status as of 6/29/21</b>					
	SNF Residents	ACF Residents	SNF Employees	ACF Employees	IL Employees
GSFH	89% on Rehab and 100% on Cameo Court	100%	71%	67%	n/a
GSVE	100%	100%	84%	67%	83%
Chase	96%	n/a	60%	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!!**

### **Termination of NYS Executive Orders Relating to COVID**

The Governor issued an Executive Order rescinding the Executive Orders issued in connection with the COVID public health emergency effective June 25<sup>th</sup>. While COVID is still a threat, and a national public health emergency still exists, this is a positive step. But it does leave Long Term Care facilities with a number of questions. LeadingAgeNY has submitted a series of recommendations to DOH and the Governor's staff, but many questions remain unresolved. The following is our understanding of the current state of key COVID-related requirements applicable to LTC providers.

**Please note that new guidance may emerge over the next few days or week:**

- **Testing:** Weekly and twice-weekly routine testing of unvaccinated nursing home (NH) and adult care facility (ACF) staff is no longer required. However, **unvaccinated NH staff must still be tested routinely in accordance with CMS Guidelines.** Under the CMS requirements, routine testing is required **monthly** in counties with a positivity rate of less than 5% in prior week. The latest CMS data indicate that all NYS counties are well below 5%.
- **Visitation:**
  - SNFs and ACFs should continue to follow their current practices until we hear otherwise. We hope that s in the near future, we will be required to follow CMS guidance on visitation and communal activities, which allow for greater social contact and unmasking among vaccinated residents, but this has not been clarified yet.
  - The regulations providing enhanced access for personal caregiving visitors apply **only** during a state public health emergency. While SNFs and ACFs must develop policies and procedures and allow the designation of caregivers, we believe that the provision *requiring* enhanced visitation by personal caregiving visitors is no longer in effect with the conclusion of the PHE. Compassionate care visits are still authorized in SNFs pursuant to federal CMS guidelines and may be authorized under existing ACF regulations.
- **Resident/Family Notification of COVID Cases and Deaths:** ACFs and SNFs are no longer required to provide these notifications under the state EO or guidance which required notification within 24 hours. However, SNFs must continue to follow the federal notification requirements which requires notification by 5 pm the next day. ACFs should follow standard requirements related to communication with residents and families concerning health status and facility conditions.

## NYS Mandated Staff Testing

Effective 6/25/21 we are required to continue testing **only those personnel who are not fully vaccinated** once per month in Health Care. This means that anyone who is fully vaccinated (two weeks from complete vaccination) does not need to be tested! We are pleased that NYS has changed this burdensome requirement to more closely align with CDC guidance.

## Delta Variant

The Delta variant — which appears to be both more contagious than earlier versions of the virus — is spreading rapidly within the U.S., after having first been identified in India.

In addition to being more contagious, Delta also appears to be more severe.

But the good news is **the vaccines continue to work extremely well against the variants such as the Delta variant**, based on the evidence so far. The best performing vaccines vastly reduce the number of COVID cases of any kind, reduce hospitalizations and **virtually eliminate death**.

## NYS Re-Opening Update: What does this mean for our campuses?

Chase: As a Skilled Nursing Facility, all restrictions remain in place. We will no longer require vaccinated staff members to test, but all staff must continue to be screened and to socially distance. Residents and staff will continue to wear masks.

GSFH: As a multilevel campus contained within a single building with shared spaces, we will continue to treat Independent Living consistently with Health Care. We will no longer require vaccinated staff members to test, but all staff must continue to be screened and to socially distance. Residents and staff will continue to wear masks.

GSVE: Unlike GSFH, GSVE is a CCRC with separate buildings and entrances for Health Care and Independent Living. We have reviewed guidance for similar CCRCs, and will be amending our protocols as follows:

**IL Residents:** Fully vaccinated residents will not be required to wear masks or to social distance, and there are no limits on dining room capacity. Vaccinated guests will be allowed in the dining venues. Proof of vaccination status will be required. IL residents visiting in Health Care will be treated consistently with all other visitors.

**IL Staff:** Fully vaccinated staff will not be required to be screened, wear masks or to social distance when in the IL building. They will be required to be screened and to wear masks and socially distance if they enter the health care building. Unvaccinated staff will continue to test, screen, wear masks, and socially distance when in either building.

**Health Care:** All restrictions remain in place. We will no longer require vaccinated staff members to test, but all staff must continue to be screened and to socially distance. Residents and staff will continue to wear masks.

We will review this position on an ongoing basis as further guidance specific to our industry becomes available.

### **Excelsior Pass (source: NYS DOH website)**

#### **Get Back to Your Favorite Businesses and Venues with Digital Proof of Your COVID-19 Vaccination or Negative Test Results**

Attend sporting events, arts performances and more! Excelsior Pass supports a safe reopening of New York by providing a free, fast and secure way to present digital proof of COVID-19 vaccination or negative test results. Think of it as a mobile airline boarding pass, but for proving you received a COVID-19 vaccination or negative test.

You can store your Pass digitally on your smartphone with the Excelsior Pass Wallet app, available for free from the Apple App Store and Google Play Store. You can also print your Pass from the [Excelsior Pass website](#) and bring it with you.

Businesses and venues can scan and validate your pass to ensure you meet any COVID-19 vaccination or testing requirements for entry. Along with your Pass, you'll be asked to show a photo ID that shows your name and birth date to verify that the Pass belongs to you. Adults may hold passes for accompanying minors.

Once you and your party enter an establishment, you will still be asked to follow State and CDC guidance regarding social distancing, face coverings and hand hygiene.

Participation in Excelsior Pass is voluntary. New Yorkers can always show alternate proof of vaccination or testing, like another mobile application or paper form, directly at a business or venue.

### **Positivity Rates and COVID Zones as of 6/22/21**

CMS positivity rates by county is the metric used for visitation per NYS. Note CMS stats lag one week behind.

County	Population	NCHS Urban Rural Classification	Tests in prior 14 days	14-day test rate	Percent Positivity in prior 14 days	Test Positivity Classification - 14 day
Broome County, NY	190,488	Small metro	8,790	4,614	0.6%	Green
Chenango County, NY	47,207	Non-core	2,714	5,749	0.7%	Green

### **Compelling Reasons to Get Vaccinated:**

- 1. Effective against serious illness, hospitalizations and death even against the new very contagious Delta variant.**
- 2. Get the NYS Excelsior pass- increased access to NYS venues and businesses.**
- 3. In non-health care settings, no need to wear a mask or socially distance in public areas.**



**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 levels of care are open for visitation.**

**At GSVE, all levels of care are open for visitation.**

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**

- No new donations to report.

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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