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February 11, 2022



To All Families and 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.

#### **STATISTICS**

as of 2/10/2022	GSFH	GSVE	Chase
<b>Year To Date + residents</b>			
SNF	1	0	17
ACF	2	5	n\ a
IL	0	0	n\ a
<b>Year To Date + Staff</b>			
SNF	21	8	20
ACF	10	12	n\ a
IL	n\ a	6	n\ a
<b>Year To Date Deaths</b>			
SNF	0	0	0
ACF	0	0	n\ a
IL	0	0	n\ a
<b>Active Residents Cases (in-house or hospitalized)</b>			
SNF	0	0	3
ACF	2	4	n\ a
IL	0	0	n\ a
<b>Staff Furloughed</b>			
SNF	4	0	1
ACF	3	4	n\ a
IL	n\ a	1	n\ a

**Changes to the information provided below are highlighted in green.**

### NYS Mask Mandate

The Governor has lifted the mask mandate for businesses, but noted Counties, Cities and businesses can choose to continue to require masks. The mask requirement remains in effect for the following:

- State regulated Health Care Settings
- State regulated Adult Care Facilities and Nursing Homes
- Correctional Facilities
- Schools and Child Care Centers
- Homeless Shelters
- Domestic Violence Shelters
- Buses and bus stations, trains and train stations, subways and subway stations, and planes and airports

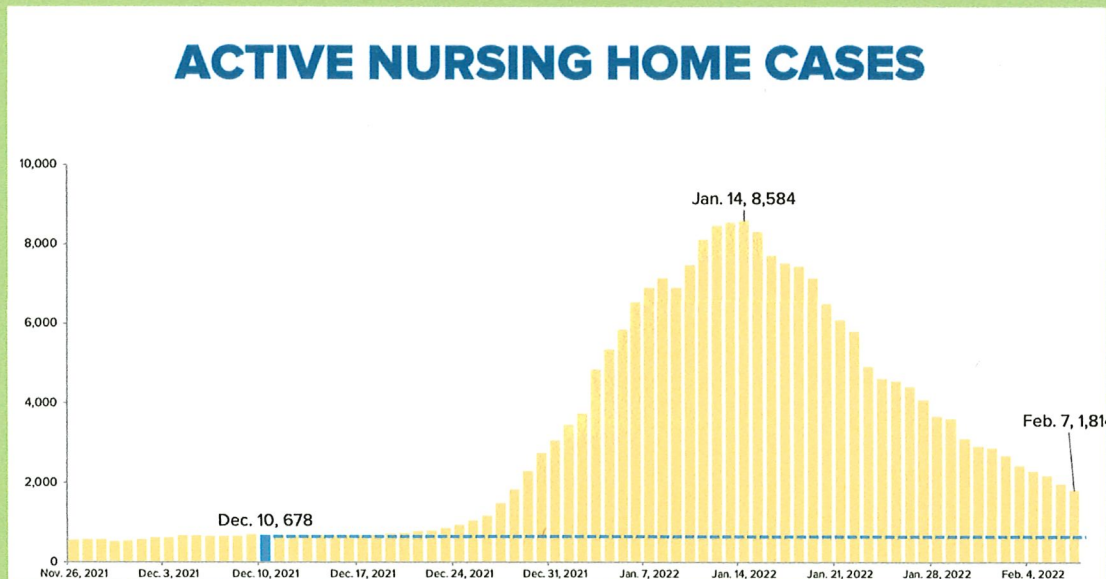
Part of her presentation included the following:

## PROGRESS SINCE DECEMBER 10

- ↓ Overall Cases
- ↓ Positivity Rate
- ↓ Total Hospitalizations
- ↓ Cases per 100,000
- ↓ New Admissions
- ↑ Vaccines & Boosters
- ↑ Hospital Capacity

Despite this good news, we are still concerned about the community transmission rate, and given our vulnerable population, we will continue to require masks for both staff and residents in Independent Living when in public areas other than when seated for drinks or a meal. We will re-evaluate this policy on a regular basis

She also provided the following information on Nursing Home's active cases, which illustrates that while there has been improvement, we are still above where we were in the late Fall and early Winter of 2021.



The CDC website reports the following information for Broome and Chenango Counties:

## Chenango County, New York

[State Health Department](#)

7-day Metrics | [7-day Percent Change](#)

Community Transmission ● High

Everyone in **Chenango County, New York** should wear a mask in public, indoor settings. Mask requirements might vary from place to place. Make sure you follow local laws, rules, regulations or guidance.

[How is community transmission calculated?](#)

	February 11, 2022
Cases	178
Case Rate per 100k	377.06
% Positivity	14.03%
Deaths	<10
% of population ≥ 5 years of age fully vaccinated	63.4%
New Hospital Admissions	6

## Broome County, New York

[State Health Department](#)

7-day Metrics | [7-day Percent Change](#)

Community Transmission ● High

Everyone in **Broome County, New York** should wear a mask in public, indoor settings. Mask requirements might vary from place to place. Make sure you follow local laws, rules, regulations or guidance.

[How is community transmission calculated?](#)

	February 11, 2022
Cases	654
Case Rate per 100k	343.33
% Positivity	13.25%
Deaths	<10
% of population ≥ 5 years of age fully vaccinated	66.1%
New Hospital Admissions	61

### NYS COVID GUIDANCE UPDATE

- **SNF Visitors Masking and Distancing:**
  - All visitors must wear a well-fitting non-surgical paper mask or a mask of higher quality (i.e., surgical mask, KN95, or N95) at all times during any visitation at the facility. If the visitor wishes, a cloth mask may be placed over the paper mask. The masks must cover both the nose and the mouth.
  - All visitors must physically distance from facility personnel and other patients/residents/visitors who are not directly associated with the specific resident(s) being visited by that individual.
- **SNF Visitor Testing**
  - All nursing homes “must verify that visitors have received a negative SARS-CoV-2 test result one day prior to visitation for antigen tests and two days prior to visitation for NAAT (e.g., PCR) tests.” This means, for example, that a test for a Sunday visit should be conducted no earlier than Saturday if it’s an antigen test or Friday if it’s a PCR test. We can accept lab results or the results of a home test.
  - Results should be presented at screening.
  - GS will provide rapid tests for those *unable to obtain them elsewhere*. These tests can be obtained from the receptionist screening the visitor, but must be administered outside of the facility independent of any assistance from our staff. Unfortunately, our staff will not be able to provide direction or physical assistance with the testing, so visitors who are unsure of their ability to self-administer the test should make alternate arrangements. For visitors who visit for multiple days, including a visitor who comes every day, proof of negative testing is required as often as feasible, at a minimum every third day (meaning at a minimum testing is required on day 1, day 4, day 7, and so on).
  - Please note that GS has a limited supply of these tests. We encourage all visitors to explore alternative sources for testing:
    - Every home in the U.S. is eligible to order 4 free at-home COVID-19 tests. The tests are completely free. Orders will usually ship in 7-12 days. The following link will allow you to order your free tests: <https://special.usps.com/testkits>
    - Pharmacies and other retail outlets.
    - Community based testing sites. To find one in your area, use the following link <https://www.hhs.gov/coronavirus/community-based-testing-sites/index.html>
  - Exemptions:

- Ombudsman representatives. Under certain circumstances, the resident and ombudsman should be made aware of the potential risk of visiting, and the visit should take place in the resident's room.
  - Compassionate care visitors who are visiting in anticipation of end of life or in the case of significant mental, physical, or social decline or crisis. Other compassionate care visits are not exempted- only those that are so urgent in nature that the requirement to provide test results would result in an unacceptable delay in visiting. The visitor must wear any additional PPE that the facility deems appropriate.
  - Emergency Medical Services personnel.
- **Protocol for SNF visitor testing:**
    - When visitors enter the building for screening they will be asked for their negative test results. Negative test results could be: a test card (Antigen Rapid test), electronic results (shown from their phone or tablet), or a paper laboratory result (PCR.)
    - Receptionist/designee will confirm negative results on the visitor sign in log
    - If the visitor does not present negative test results they will be given an iHealth OTC COVID-19 Antigen Rapid Test.
    - The visitor should then return to their car and complete the test
    - All tests cards should be discarded in a red biohazard bag located in the lobby.
    - In the event a visitor refuses testing they will not be permitted in the facility. The receptionist should contact the HC Nurse immediately. The visitor may provide their contact information and the Nursing Home Administrator will contact them on the next business day.
    - Note: If a visitor enters the facility after normal reception hours, the House Charge Nurse will be responsible to confirm negative test results and document on the visitor sign in log.
  - Positive Results and Infection within Prior 90 Days:
    - If a visitor tests positive, they should be excluded until they meet the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) criteria for discontinuing isolation for the general public (i.e., currently for five days) and present a negative test.
    - If a visitor has had COVID-19 in the past 90 days, they must still be tested. If they test positive, they must be excluded.

## **COVERAGE OF AT HOME COVID-19 KITS**

Original Medicare does not currently pay for over-the-counter COVID-19 tests, but **CMS is launching an initiative in early spring 2022** that provides payment directly to eligible pharmacies and other entities that are participating in this initiative to enable people with Medicare to get up to eight free over-the-counter COVID-19 tests a month. Starting in early spring, people with Medicare will be able to go to an eligible pharmacies and other entities that are participating in this initiative to receive over-the-counter COVID-19 tests for free through their Medicare part B coverage. More information about eligible pharmacies and other entities that are participating in this initiative will be available in the early spring. Once the initiative is up and running, CMS will encourage beneficiaries to ask their local pharmacy or current health care provider whether they are participating in this initiative.

This new initiative will enable payment directly to eligible pharmacies and other entities that are participating in this initiative to allow Medicare beneficiaries to pick up tests at no cost at the point of sale and without needing to be reimbursed.

Right now, Medicare Advantage Plans may cover and pay for over-the-counter COVID-19 tests as a supplemental benefit in addition to covering Medicare Part A and Part B benefits. If you're in a Medicare Advantage Plan, check with the plan to see if it will currently cover and pay for these tests. All Medicare beneficiaries with Part B will be eligible to get eight free over-the-counter COVID-19 tests per month through our new initiative, whether enrolled in a Medicare Advantage plan or not.

#### **BOOSTER MANDATE FOR HEALTH CARE EMPLOYEES**

The NYS mandate requires all covered health care employees currently eligible to receive a booster dose to do so by 2/21/22, absent an approved medical exemption. GS will host free booster clinics for employees, and will require documentation of boosters obtained elsewhere. Employees not currently eligible for a booster shot will be required to receive the booster within 30 days of eligibility.

Patti Mackey  
GSC COO