



March 31, 2021

To All Independent Living and Adult Care Residents:

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 3/24/21-3/30/21

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

3/24/21

- An employee who works in our Independent Living administration department tested positive for COVID-19. The staff member is asymptomatic and will self-isolate for the required number of days. Contact tracing is complete and no residents or staff members were in close contact.

3/27/21

- As part of our weekly staff testing, two staff members have tested positive for COVID-19. One staff member works in the Maintenance department and one staff member works in the Dietary office. Both employees are asymptomatic and will follow the Health Departments recommendation for isolation and quarantine. There were no residents who were considered in close contact. There is one staff member considered a close contact, per NYS DOH the staff member who is considered a close contact does not need to quarantine because the staff member was fully vaccinated.

3/29/21

- A visitor to the Skilled Nursing Facility tested positive for COVID-19. The visitor is asymptomatic. There is one resident who is considered is considered exposed (the resident having the visit.) There are no staff who are considered exposed.

Resident Testing 3/24/21-3/30/21

GSFH

3/26/21

- Three of our residents on our rehab unit tested positive for COVID-19. These residents will be on isolation for 14 days. There were no close contacts to any of the residents.

Chase: No new positive test results.

GSVE: No new positive tests results.

COVID related Deaths 3/24/21-3/30/21

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

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

GSVE: We are happy to report there were no COVID-19 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.
 - As of 3/30/21, NYS residents age 30 or older, or with certain underlying conditions are also eligible to be vaccinated at other sites. As of 4/6/21, the age requirement will expand to those 16 and over. 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 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 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:** 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

	SNF Residents	ACF Residents	SNF Employees	ACF Employees	IL Employees
GSFH	Rehab 100% Cameo Court 97%	100.0%	58.0%	42.0%	n/a
GSVE	96%	96.0%	79.0%	48.0%	74.0%

Chase	99%	n/a	38.0%	n/a	n/a
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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 in SNFs are required to be tested twice per week for COVID-19, and those who do not meet the FT 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. GSC has updated our policy for testing for staff based in IL and ALR to require only one test per week which is what NYS DOH recommends. This will help conserve resources and ease some of the burden on the staff administering the tests.

Furloughed Staff

Furloughing is no longer having a major impact on facility staffing, so we will no longer be reporting on this metric. Of course, if this changes, we will re-introduce this.

NYS Visitation Guidance: Major Changes

On March 25, 2021, NYS DOH issued revised nursing home visitation guidance to align with guidelines recently released by the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. The guidance, which took effect immediately, permits visitation at all times and for all residents with limited exceptions for unvaccinated residents in areas of high community spread and lower resident vaccination rates, residents with confirmed COVID-19 infection or those in isolation or quarantine. Facilities must still continue to adhere to strong infection control practices.

The new guidance eliminates the requirement that visitation must pause for 14 days if there has been a positive case of COVID-19. The new guidelines are more liberal, and require visitation to pause if there is a positive case, and require the facility to perform mass testing of residents and staff. Dependent upon the results of the mass testing and what it indicates about the spread of COVID-19, the facility may resume visitation on specific units or throughout the facility.

Per NYS DOH, visitation can be conducted through different means based on a facility's structure and residents' needs, such as in resident rooms, dedicated visitation spaces, outdoors, and for circumstances beyond compassionate care situations. Regardless of how visits are conducted, there are certain core principles and best practices that reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission including, but not limited to:

- Screening of all who enter the facility for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 (e.g., temperature checks, questions about and observations of signs or symptoms), and denial of entry of those with signs or symptoms or those who have had close contact with someone with COVID-19 infection in the prior 14 days (regardless of the visitor's vaccination status);
- Hand hygiene (use of alcohol-based hand rub is preferred);
- The use of face coverings or masks (covering mouth and nose);
- Social distancing at least six feet between persons;
- Instructional signage throughout the facility and proper visitor education on COVID-19 signs and symptoms, infection control precautions, other applicable facility practices (e.g., use of face covering or mask, specified entries, exits and routes to designated areas, hand hygiene);
- Cleaning and disinfecting high frequency touched surfaces in the facility often, and designated visitation areas after each visit;
- Appropriate staff use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- Effective cohorting of residents (e.g., separate areas dedicated to COVID-19 care);
- Resident and staff testing conducted as required;
- Visitors who are unable to adhere to the core principles of COVID-19 infection prevention should not be permitted to visit or should be asked to leave;
- Outdoor visitation is preferred even when the resident and visitor are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 as outdoor visits generally pose a lower risk of transmission due to increased space and airflow;

- Facilities should allow indoor visitation at all times and for all residents (regardless of vaccination status), except for a few circumstances when visitation should be limited due to a high risk of COVID-19 transmission (exception - compassionate care visits should be permitted at all times).
- Facilities should consider how the number of visitors per resident at one time and the total number of visitors in the facility at one time may affect the ability to maintain the core principles of infection prevention. In addition, nursing homes should:
 - Consider scheduling visits for a specified length of time to help ensure all residents are able to receive visitors.
 - Limit visitor movement in the facility
 - If possible, for residents who share a room, visits should not be conducted in the resident’s room
 - For situations where there is a roommate and the health status of the resident prevents leaving the room, facilities should attempt to enable in- room visitation while adhering to the core principles of COVID-19 infection prevention
 - **Allow for, if the resident is fully vaccinated, they can choose to have close contact (including touch) with their visitor while wearing a well-fitting face mask and performing hand-hygiene before and after.** Regardless, visitors should physically distance from other residents and staff in the facility.
- Indoor visitation may be impacted if there is an outbreak in the facility.
- Visitors are NOT required to be tested as a condition of visitation, but our facilities will continue to offer testing for visitors who request it.
- Compassionate Care Visits: While end-of-life situations have been used as examples of compassionate care situations, the term “compassionate care situations” does not exclusively refer to end-of-life situations. Compassionate care visits, and visits required under federal disability rights law, are allowed at all times, regardless of a resident’s vaccination status, the county’s COVID-19 positivity rate, or an outbreak. Examples of other types of compassionate care situations include, but are not limited to:
 - A resident, who was living with their family before recently being admitted to a nursing home, is struggling with the change in environment and lack of physical family support.
 - A resident who is grieving after a friend or family member recently passed away.
 - A resident who needs cueing and encouragement with eating or drinking, previously provided by family and/or caregiver(s), is experiencing weight loss or dehydration.
 - A resident, who used to talk and interact with others, is experiencing emotional distress, seldom speaking, or crying more frequently (when the resident had rarely cried in the past).
 - Visits by any individual that can meet the resident’s needs, such as clergy or lay persons offering religious and spiritual support.

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.

County	FIPS	State	FEMA Regi	Populatio	NCHS Urban Rural Classification	Tests in prior 14 days	14-day test rat	Percent Positivity in prior 14 days	Test Positivity Classification - 14 day
Broome County, NY	36007	NY	2	190,488	Small metro	13,889	7,291	4.6%	Green
Chenango County, NY	36017	NY	2	47,207	Non-core	4,546	9,630	3.2%	Green

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, the SNF Rehab Unit is closed for visitation, while Cameo Court (SNF LTC floor) and ACF\ALP remains open.

At GSVE, the SNF is closed for visitation, but ALR\EALR\SNALR are open.

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

- GSFH Auxiliary provided Easter goodie bags for all GSFH staff.
- The VFW Auxiliary Post 478 on Court Street in Binghamton donated 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.

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-19.



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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