



June 2, 2021



To All Independent Living and Adult Care Residents,

Change in Schedule for COVID Letters

Effective in May, we moved to generating the COVID letters for residents, families and staff every two weeks rather than the weekly schedule. Of course, we will continue to do broadcasts of any positive test results as required, and will also update any changes to the visitation schedule on a timely basis.

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 5/19/21-6/1/21

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 5/19/21-6/1/21

GSFH: On 5/27/21, we learned that 1 of our residents who resides on the 4th floor ALP unit *tested positive for COVID-19*. This resident remains hospitalized.

Chase: No new positive test results.

GSVE: No new positive tests results.

COVID related Deaths 5/19/21-6/1/21

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 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://ami-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 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.

Vaccination Status as of 6/1/21					
	SNF Residents	ACF Residents	SNF Employees	ACF Employees	IL Employees
GSFH	95%	100%	64%	61%	n/a
GSVE	100%	100%	82%	70%	75%
Chase	90% fully vaccinated and 6% with 1st dose	n/a	58%	56% and 5% with 1st dose	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!!**

Please be sensitive to the fact that vaccination status is a personal matter, and some people may have made the decision to decline the vaccine for various reasons, or may be medically ineligible for the vaccine.

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.

Positivity Rates and COVID Zones- Week ending 5/25/21

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

County	Percent Positivity in prior 14 days	Test Positivity Classification - 14 day
Broome County, NY	2.6%	Green
Chenango County, NY	1.9%	Green

NYS Re-Opening Update:

New CDC Guidelines were announced on 5/13/21, and NYS announced that effective 5/19/21, NYS will also adopt these guidelines.

The guidance was updated to reflect that fully vaccinated people no longer need to wear a mask or physically distance in any setting, except where required by federal, state, local, tribal, or territorial laws, rules, and regulations, including local business and workplace guidance. Individual businesses can continue to require masks. The Department of Health strongly recommends masks in indoor settings where vaccination status of individuals is unknown.

The following CDC recommendations apply to non-healthcare settings.

Fully vaccinated people can:

- Resume activities without wearing masks or physically distancing, except where required by federal, state, local, tribal, or territorial laws, rules and regulations, including local business and workplace guidance
- Resume domestic travel and refrain from testing before or after travel or self-quarantine after travel
- Refrain from testing before leaving the United States for international travel (unless required by the destination) and refrain from self-quarantine after arriving back in the United States
- Refrain from testing following a known exposure, if asymptomatic, with some exceptions for specific settings
- Refrain from quarantine following a known exposure if asymptomatic
- Refrain from routine screening testing if feasible

For now, fully vaccinated people should continue to:

- Get tested if experiencing COVID-19 symptoms
- Follow CDC and health department travel requirements and recommendations

Unvaccinated individuals, under both CDC and state guidance, must wear masks in all public settings.

In NYS, consistent with the CDC guidance, Pre-K to 12 schools, public transit, homeless shelters, correctional facilities, *nursing homes, and healthcare settings* will continue to follow State's existing COVID-19 health guidelines until more New Yorkers are fully vaccinated.

GSC is currently reviewing this new guidance, but at this time we will not be changing our current policy of requiring masks in all public areas, including those located in Independent Living, regardless of vaccination status. **As a private business, we have the right to require mask use in public spaces.** Our Independent Living areas are part of larger healthcare campuses, and in the past, NYS Department of Health has viewed them as subject to their scrutiny. In addition, staff move between the levels of care.

We will review this position on an ongoing basis as further guidance specific to our industry becomes available and update everyone in two weeks. We have reached out to LeadingAgeNY to see how other multilevel facilities are handling this, and we discuss this at our weekly senior management COVID meetings.

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.

Q: Why isn't GSC mandating employees receive the vaccine?

A: As we reviewed earlier, we are trying to encourage employees through education as opposed to mandation in recognition that some people have deep uncertainties about the vaccine's safety and effectiveness. We provide resources to help employees understand the vaccine better, and hope more employees will choose to become vaccinated as time goes by.

In addition, we have to be sensitive to the work force implications. There is a severe shortage of qualified healthcare personnel, and imposing a mandate that could result in losing good employees and further shrinking our applicant pool is not something we are prepared to do at this point. However, we do discuss this issue on a weekly basis and check with our peers on emerging trends.

Donations

- Jodie Wylie has donated new decorative American flags for GSFH's flower bed in the front of the building.
- The family of Fran Decker donated flowers for the grounds 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>

Kathy Swezey
GSFH Executive Director

Jennifer Davidson
GSVE Health Care Administrator

MaryKay McKinney
GSVE IL Executive Director