



September 23, 2020

Residents, Family Members and Neighbors,

On September 17th Governor Abbott and the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (“HHSC”) announced an expansion of policies regarding visitation for eligible nursing, assisted living, and intermediate care facilities, home and community-based service providers, and inpatient hospice, effective Thursday, September 24th. The policy announcement was very broad, and no specific guidance or directives were provided regarding the implementation of the policy’s goals. The information we have received to date from HHSC’s Policy Interpretation agency is similarly vague and inconsistent with other directives. Furthermore, we have been informed that modifications to a facility’s visitation policy will be voluntary, and that our facility must first submit an application and subsequently be approved prior to making any changes to the existing policy.

As we all have seen over the past six months regarding COVID-19 protocols, there is a fine balance between freedoms and public health policy. As a healthcare provider on the front line of the COVID-19 battle, with a resident population comprised entirely of the most vulnerable among us, we have a unique perspective. We appreciate more than most the importance of socialization, physical contact, and expressions of family love to our resident’s overall wellbeing. However, in making these difficult decisions, we will always err on the side of protecting our seniors from COVID-19. We also have a duty to protect the Villages team members who have given so much of themselves over the past several months.

All is to say, changes to our visitation policy remain fluid. We anticipate more definitive guidance to be issued in the coming days. As we have done throughout this global pandemic, we will continue to follow directives from the Centers for Disease Control, the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (“CMS”), HHSC and the Dallas County Department of Health and Human Services, tailoring their policies to the individual needs of our resident population.

In our prior COVID-19 correspondence we let you know that CMS had instituted a nationwide COVID-19 testing protocol, with the frequency of testing based on the local county’s percent positive rate. Since that policy became effective, the Dallas County positivity rate has ranged from 10.0% to 11.2% requiring us to test all employees twice per week. We have now done several rounds of testing, and in the most recent tests an employee tested positive. Privacy laws prevent us from providing specific information, but we can disclose certain limited information. This employee works in administration and has little to no contact with residents. Thankfully, the employee is presently asymptomatic, and we are certain the disease was contracted outside our facility. Our team member is now working from home in quarantine for at least ten days. We are thankful for their good health and that no other team members tested positive, including those who frequently come in contact with the employee. We believe our scientifically based protocols which include mandatory mask wearing, social distancing, daily COVID-19 screening, twice per week testing, restricted visitations, etc. and the diligence with which they are followed are the primary reason we have yet to experience a single instance of community spread within the building. No one who has not left the facility since March has tested positive for COVID-19.



Thank you so much for your continued support of the greater Villages of Lake Highlands family. We simply could not do this without you. There is an African proverb “it takes a village to raise a child”; given our facility name we cannot think of a more appropriate sentiment to describe what we are all experiencing as we work tirelessly to protect our seniors. It Takes a Village...all of us doing our small part each day.

We will continue to keep you informed and anticipate providing more specific guidance in the near term relating to modifications of the current visitation policy. As always please feel free to reach out to us with any questions or concerns.

Villages of Lake Highlands Team