



May 8, 2020

Dear Residents, Family Members and Staff Members,

On Thursday afternoon, we received notification that a third staff member tested positive for COVID-19. This staff member has not been in our facility since April 28 and now is isolated at home to recover. At this time, we do not have any confirmed COVID-19 cases among our resident population, nor do we have any residents with symptoms of COVID-19.

We notified the Chicago Health Department and the Illinois Department of Public Health about this third incidence. While you may have questions about this staff member's well-being, please respect the privacy of this person as well as all other employees and residents by observing HIPAA's confidentiality guidelines.

This letter also serves as Mercy Circle's compliance with a new guideline published by the Illinois Department of Public Health requiring us to notify all residents, their families and/or responsible parties, and employees of learning about a positive COVID-19 diagnosis for a resident or a staff member.

To ensure convenient and prompt notification, we are now using a new communication system in which you will receive an automated voice message and/or text message alerting you of a written update posted on our website. Please reference updates on our website at [MercyCircle.org](https://www.MercyCircle.org). Written updates will be posted according to the CMS guidelines.

During the last five weeks, six of our skilled care residents and four of our assisted living residents were tested for the virus. All 10 residents' test results were negative. A total of 14 staff members have been tested. Eight staff members' test results were negative; three were positive, and we are awaiting the test outcome for three staff members.

In light of a third staff person testing positive for COVID-19, Moira McQuillan, M.D., our medical director, has recommended the testing of some staff members. This selective testing is underway. As another precautionary measure last week to follow the guidance of the Chicago Department of Public Health, our skilled nursing care unit was placed on droplet and contact isolation precautions. This proactive measure will be in place until May 15.

Our health agencies stress the importance of following infection control measures as key to keeping the virus out of our community. To reassure you that Mercy Circle is following the guidelines of health agencies, I have listed precautions we have and continue to take during this global pandemic. We follow all procedures recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, as well as the Chicago and Illinois Departments of Health.

Here are key protocols we follow:

Staff members are

- Screened, including temperature, two times per shift
- Consistently assigned to specific areas in the community
- Not allowed to work if they have symptoms related to COVID-19 and are directed to isolate at home until they are symptom-free and cleared by their physician to return to work
- Directed to practice hand-hygiene, universal masking and social distancing when it is possible to do so while providing care
- Directed to follow strict infection control measures while at work

Residents are

- Screened three times a day for any signs of COVID-19 if they live in our long-term care, memory care and assisted living wings
- Screened, including temperature, and self-monitor daily for signs of COVID -19 when they reside in our independent living wing; if they detect symptoms, residents should contact their physician and then notify our Director of Nursing Anita Ajayi, RN at extension 3664 because she is responsible for tracking data for Mercy Circle
- Encouraged to practice hand-hygiene, universal masking and social distancing

With the extension of Illinois' executive order to "stay at home," we encourage residents only to leave the community for essential visits, such as physician visits and errands for medications and groceries. As additional ways to protect residents and staff members, all communal dining, gatherings and activities remain suspended and our housekeeping staff regularly disinfects high-touch common areas during the day.

Mercy Circle maintains its strict no visitor policy. For exceptions such as end-of-life visits, we screen approved visitors for COVID-19 symptoms and give them a mask.

At this time, Mercy Circle has an adequate inventory of PPE and medical supplies. We are grateful to our employees who make it possible for me to report our staffing also is sufficient.

Our top priority is the health and well-being of our entire community. We recognize the anxiety and concerns that you may experience. So, please know you can count on our team of dedicated, skilled and compassionate professionals as we do our best to meet your needs during this challenging time.

Thank you for your continued support during this time. We will continue to keep you informed. If you have any questions, please contact me at 773-253-3627.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Frances Lachowicz". The signature is written in black ink on a light-colored background.

Frances Lachowicz
Executive Director