



June 19, 2020

Dear Residents, Family Members and Staff Members,

*Our residents and staff members continue to be free of COVID-19.* This fact encourages us to fortify our commitment to your safety by heeding all guidelines published by the agencies that have provided direction during this global pandemic.

So today, all residents and staff members, who reside and work in Mercy Circle's assisted living, memory care and skilled nursing care wings, will be tested for a second time in two weeks. Conducting this extensive testing complies with a new regulation announced by the Illinois Department of Public Health.

If all of today's test results are negative for COVID-19, Mercy Circle has the data to confirm it meets the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' criteria so we can begin to ease current restrictions.

### ***Plans for easing restrictions***

Currently, we are planning how to

- Schedule activities for groups of 10 or fewer people
- Coordinate on-campus visits with healthcare professionals
- Reopen the salon

In addition, Mercy Circle joyfully can once again extend its spirit of hospitality as we welcome four new residents into our independent living and assisted living communities during the next few weeks. We have prepared a comprehensive plan for new residents to ensure everyone in our community remains virus-free.

*The good news:* Today, we received a notice from IDPH detailing numerous requirements to offer outdoor visits for residents in our healthcare settings. We will announce Mercy Circle's system for encouraging and facilitating these visits next week.

For now, please contact Mary Kate Moriarty, 773-253-3613, to schedule virtual visits. While each day makes it more difficult to be apart, it is your cooperation with so many restrictions that has helped us approach a period of reopening our community.

### ***Current precautions remain for now***

At this time, Mercy Circle maintains its no visitor policy.

- As the weather makes it more inviting to spend time outdoors, please remember visiting outdoors with family and friends is not yet permitted.
- When you might take a walk outside, you are required to wear a face mask and to wash your hands when you return.

While a limited number of residents can travel for essential appointments to their healthcare providers' office, all are required to wear a face mask and wash their hands upon returning.

If for some unforeseen reason we identify another case of COVID-19 in our community, we may be required to return to our current restrictions. We will notify the Illinois and Chicago Departments of Public Health and you about any new positive diagnoses.

While staying faithful to all the guidelines of CDC, CMS, IDPH and CDPH, we continue the following practices as we aspire to revitalize daily life at Mercy Circle.

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 symptom-free and cleared to return to work
- Required to wear personal protective equipment, including face shields where appropriate
- Directed to practice hand-hygiene, universal masking and social distancing when it is possible to do so while providing care
- Instructed to follow strict infection prevention and 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-monitored daily for signs of COVID-19 when they reside in our independent living apartments; if they detect symptoms, residents should contact their physician and then notify our Director of Nursing, Anita Ajayi, RN, at extension 3664
- Advised those in skilled care and assisted living are not to leave the community except for essential medical appointments and to coordinate such appointments with Anita Ajayi, RN, at extension 3664, for additional guidance
- Advised those in independent living to leave the community only for essential visits, such as physician appointments, errands for medications and groceries
- Encouraged to practice hand-hygiene, universal masking and social distancing

Mercy Circle also

- Maintains a strict no visitor policy with the exception of end-of-life visits for which approved visitors are screened and required to wear a mask
- Continues to suspend all gatherings and communal activities and dining

- Disinfects throughout each day high-touch common areas
- Has an adequate inventory of PPE and medical supplies
- Reports appropriate and sufficient staffing for all levels of living and care

Yes, we are moving forward! Our goal is to balance our yearning for social connections with the safety and well-being of everyone in our community. Please call me at 773-253-3627 so we can discuss any topic important to you.



Frances Lachowicz  
Executive Director

*PS More good news! Mercy Circle again can boast about its 5-star CMS rating.*