



August 14, 2020

Dear Residents, Family Members and Staff Members,

Today, new guidelines published by the Illinois Department of Public Health take effect for Mercy Circle and for all senior living communities with skilled nursing care, memory care and assisted living residents across the State. These guidelines start with stating this plan strives to balance enforcing necessary precautions to protect residents from the virus while considering the importance of their quality of life.

IDPH has outlined three phases organized by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, each requiring a 14-day period with no new cases of COVID-19 among residents, before proceeding to the next phase. If and when a resident receives a new positive test result for the virus, a community returns to CMS Phase One and confirms to IDPH it is implementing the highest level of mitigation.

We also are distributing a new advisory from the Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program that provides more detailed information about the virus and steps both residents and all facilities can take to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

New IDPH guidelines applying to our community

Last Friday, I announced we hoped to reinstate outdoor visits for assisted living residents starting on Saturday, August 15. Based on these new IDPH guidelines and confirmation of no new cases of the virus, we hope to restart outdoor visits sometime next week for both assisted living and skilled nursing care residents. IDPH will make this determination after another round of testing this coming week. As soon as we have permission, we will inform residents.

Currently, Mercy Circle's skilled nursing care, memory care and assisted living residents are in CMS Phase One which specifies

- Arranging virtual visits for assisted living, memory care and skilled nursing care residents
- Continuing to offer virtual programming which Mercy Circle provides on Channel 8, including daily Mass from Monday through Saturday
- Continuing to observe all protocols for infection control, social distancing, face masks and hand-hygiene
- Expanding compassionate care visits to include residents, whose health has sharply declined or whose close relative or friend recently passed away, only in their rooms or in another designated area
- Applying all prescreening practices for all visitors who enter the building

- Suspending communal dining and group activities until the community moves to CMS Phase Two
- Restricting visitors, including beauticians, volunteers and other non-essential healthcare professionals
- Arranging telehealth visits when possible and avoiding all trips for medical appointments unless they are absolutely necessary
- Requiring, for the first time, two visitors for a resident must be from the same household and provide their personal contact information when they plan a visit; they also must contact Mercy Circle if they experience any symptoms of COVID-19 during a period of three days following their visit in order for us to facilitate contact tracing

While these IDPH guidelines do not apply directly to independent living residents, we encourage independent living residents to continue planning outdoor visitations.

Update on residents' recovery

Last Saturday, I reported a new incidence of COVID-19 for a resident. At this time, two residents still are recuperating in the designated area for those with the virus in our skilled nursing care wing. Our staff there follows all CDC-designated precautions as they deliver care for them. In addition, two residents are in the hospital.

One assisted living resident has recovered and returned to the person's apartment. Please respect everyone's privacy by observing all HIPAA regulations.

Report on test results

Last week, we reported one inconclusive result for an asymptomatic assisted living resident whom we retested. This person received a negative test result.

This week, Mercy Circle tested 54 residents and received negative test results for all 54 residents.

In addition, 108 employees were tested. We have received results for more than 80 staff members and all are negative. One staff member, who last worked as a CNA in assisted living on Sunday, August 9, tested positive. This individual is at home recuperating from the virus.

On this Thursday, all independent living residents were tested, and we hope to have their results very soon. They will be tested monthly if it is indicated to do so.

We continue to adhere to our weekly testing plan both for all staff members and for residents in our assisted living, memory care and skilled nursing care wings.

Our daily life

Every single day, we practice numerous protocols as we strive to mitigate the spread of the virus by following the directives of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, and the Chicago and Illinois Departments of Public Health.

At this time, Mercy Circle is

- Implementing contact and droplet precautions in our skilled nursing care area
- Helping combat the effects of isolation for all residents
- Monitoring all residents who live in our healthcare settings for symptoms
- Screening all employees at the beginning of and during each shift
- Enforcing the City of Chicago's travel restrictions to "hot spots" that now require a 14-day quarantine upon return from 19 States and Puerto Rico
- Advocating that all residents only leave the campus for medically necessary appointments
 - Assisted living residents must call Janet Tucker at extension 3650
 - Skilled nursing care residents must call Anita Ajayi, RN, at extension 3664
- Encouraging residents to participate in activities and programs by watching Channel 8
- Assisting with planning both phone and video visits by contacting LifeEnrichment@MercyCircle.org

As part of our united effort to abate the spread of COVID-19, please remember to

- Always put on a face mask covering your nose and mouth before leaving your residence and wear your mask until you return
- Practice six-foot social distancing in all situations
- Wash your hands regularly and when leaving and returning to your home
- Avoid all non-essential outings and social gatherings

We are grateful to everyone who suggests ways to make our daily life at Mercy Circle both reassuring and gratifying.

To contact me, please call our main phone number, 773-253-3627 so we can discuss your concerns and questions.

Sincerely,



Frances Lachowicz
Executive Director