



August 21, 2020

Dear Residents, Family Members and Staff Members,

We received negative results for COVID-19 for all residents and staff members who have been tested for the virus since August 3, 2020. Achieving 14 days without a new positive test outcome for a resident has put Mercy Circle in CMS Phase One, according to the new Illinois Department of Public Health guidelines that became effective last Friday, August 14.

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

As you know, our first occurrence of a resident contracting COVID-19 was in July, close to four months after the onset of this global pandemic in Chicago. Since this first incidence, a total of seven residents have tested positive for the virus. I am pleased to report three residents have recovered and returned to their residences, and one resident remains in the hospital.

### ***Mourning the loss of our residents***

With profound sadness, I confirm three residents have succumbed to the virus, including two members of our community who passed away this week.

### ***Visiting with family and friends***

Now that Mercy Circle meets all the criteria for CMS Phase One designated by IDPH and the Chicago Department of Public Health, we are immediately reinstating

- Outdoor visitations for all assisted living, memory care and skilled nursing care residents on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays, for 1-hour time slots between 1pm and 4pm, in the Courtyard the Sisters of Mercy have reserved for our exclusive use
  - Visitors currently must
    - Be limited to two people 18-years and older from the same household
    - Respond to prescreening 24 hours before their visit
    - Agree to report any symptoms of COVID-19 that occur during three days after their visit
    - Provide their personal contact information to facilitate contact tracing which Mercy Circle will conduct if necessary
  - Residents and their guests should schedule their visits by sending an email to [LifeEnrichment@MercyCircle.org](mailto:LifeEnrichment@MercyCircle.org)
- Activities for 10 or fewer residents will resume in activities rooms set-up for social distancing on each floor

While these IDPH guidelines do not apply directly to independent living residents, we encourage independent living residents to continue planning outdoor visitations following the same procedure and schedule.

Now that residents will spend more time together, it is imperative that everyone observes social distancing, wears a face mask and practices regular hand-hygiene.

While we are reopening these ways to enjoy the company of each other, we must achieve CMS Phase Two to offer communal dining. So, we will continue to deliver meals to assisted living and skilled nursing care residents so they can dine in their rooms. As soon as it is appropriate to reintroduce communal dining, we gladly will share this information with you.

### ***Enjoying both in-person and virtual time together***

We encourage everyone to take walks through our beautiful grounds and sit on the benches at the main entrance or in the patio or Courtyard.

To enhance residents' daily routine, we encourage participating in what is broadcast on Channel 8

- Activities and programs which Mercy Circle provides
- Daily Mass from Monday through Saturday

### ***Understanding how the CMS Phases are determined***

Occurrences of the virus in IDPH's Region 7, which is all of Chicago, affect the status of all senior living communities in the City. The metrics include a positivity rate over 5.0 percent for a 7-day rolling average. Today, Chicago's positivity rate is 4.9 percent. Other factors are increased hospital admissions and ICU bed availability.

I reassure you that Mercy Circle has an adequate inventory of all PPE equipment and all infection control and prevention practices in place.

### ***Planning for CMS Phase Two***

In anticipation of moving forward to CMS Phase Two, we are developing plans to safely offer communal dining and salon services. CMS Phase Two begins when Mercy Circle reaches another 14 consecutive days with no new positive cases for residents.

If one resident tests positive at any point in this process, a senior living community returns to CMS Phase One.

### ***Sustaining our vigilance***

Residents and staff continue to adhere to 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

- Striving to 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. This past week, Nebraska and Wisconsin were removed from the City's list and Kansas and Iowa, removed a week ago, were added back to the list.
- 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 families and friends to take advantage of compassionate visits with residents whose family member or dear friend has passed away or who is experiencing significant health challenges by contacting the staff members listed above
- Applying all prescreening practices for all healthcare professionals and other essential visitors who enter the building
- Restricting visitors, including beauticians, volunteers and other non-essential healthcare professionals

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

- Put on a face mask covering your nose and mouth before leaving your residence and wearing that mask until you return home
- Practice six-foot social distancing in all situations
- Wash hands regularly using soap or sanitizer available at numerous stations
- Avoid all non-essential outings and social gatherings

Thank you for helping us navigate a complex regulatory environment which is designed to protect our residents and staff members. Please call my office, 773-253-3627, so we can discuss your concerns, questions and suggestions.

Sincerely,



Frances Lachowicz  
Executive Director