



December 4, 2020

Dear Residents, Families and Staff Members,

Due to the increasing number of people being tested for COVID-19, our lab and others are taking longer to process and send results. For some, we realize a longer waiting period to learn the outcome of your most recent test can cause anxiety. So, we truly appreciate your patience, and hope you agree that accuracy is paramount.

Vaccination program for our community

As you know from national and local media, Pfizer and Moderna, now in the final stages of review by the FDA, have made substantial progress. Concurrently, the federal government initiated plans to distribute and administer both doses of an approved vaccine to our residents and staff members. We are pleased to announce CVS is the pharmacy assigned to partner with Mercy Circle for this process.

While it is premature to take action, I thought you might like to know about CVS' role and responsibilities. They include educating us about the vaccine we will receive; registering of all recipients in collaboration with our staff; handling all ordering and transportation of necessary materials used for our community; providing trained professionals to administer the inoculations; managing billing details with you and filing reports with the CDC; and advising us when it is time to schedule the vaccine's second dose.

To facilitate planning, will you please call extension 3600 if you are interested in receiving the vaccine? When the registration process begins, CVS will ask for your insurance information and provide a consent form for you to sign. At this time, we do not have a date certain to announce.

Test results

While we do not have many test outcomes to report, here is a summary of our status as of Friday afternoon.

- On Monday, November 30, we tested all residents who live in our healthcare settings. So far, all 18 skilled nursing care residents received negative results and all 38 assisted living residents are still awaiting their results.
- On Monday and Tuesday, we tested 102 staff members; as of this afternoon, 64 received negative results and, as you already know five, who took the rapid test, received positive outcomes and remain self-quarantined at home. Results for 33 still are pending.
- On Thursday and today, we completed the second round of employee testing for 81 staff members. It is too early to expect these results.

In addition to positive outcomes for five staff members, which we reported to you on December 1, we learned on Thursday, December 3, an assisted living resident, who returned to Mercy Circle after spending two weeks with family, tested positive for COVID-19 when she was admitted to the hospital for another reason. She remains hospitalized at this time.

Any resident who leaves Mercy Circle, even for an essential appointment, should call our Director of Nursing Anita Ajayi, RN, at 773-253-3664. She will advise you about the prudence of being quarantined—even if only away for an hour.

We will continue to manage our schedule for rigorous testing that includes

- All employees tested twice a week, once on Monday or Tuesday and again on Thursday or Friday
- All assisted living, memory care, rehab and skilled nursing care residents tested on Monday
- All independent living residents, who are interested in being tested, can reserve their place for our bi-weekly schedule on Tuesday, December 15

Mercy Circle also can administer rapid tests for COVID-19 for a resident or employee experiencing symptoms or exposed to someone with the virus. We appreciate your helpful cooperation with all our testing protocols.

Tier 3 stay-at-home advisory remains in place

Everyone, including independent living residents who do not live in a licensed area of our community, should faithfully follow the practices we have instituted in response to Governor Pritzker's Tier 3 stay-at-home advisory.

Even with this advisory in place, we have arranged a way for residents and their families to plan 20-minute "window" visits between 1pm and 4pm on Wednesday, Friday and Saturday. All visits are located at the west end of Mercy Hall where visitors will be inside the vestibule but separated by glass doors from residents.

Phones are available for talking while safely seeing each other. Please request a visitation time 48 hours in advance by sending your request to LifeEnrichment@MercyCircle.org. As part of the reservation process, an employee will confirm our prescreening protocol.

For all residents, Mercy Circle

- Added more programs to Channel 8
- Closed the Salon
- Published an updated activities calendar to comply with Tier 3 guidelines
- Offers some small group activities now limited to six or fewer people, with social distancing and other precautions managed by Life Enrichment
- Delivers all meals to residents' apartments or rooms

- Provides other programs and services that remain the same

Thank you for following our precautions to mitigate the virus' spread that include

- Wearing a face mask that covers your nose and mouth
- Practicing six-foot social distancing in all situations
- Washing your hands regularly with soap or sanitizer at numerous stations
- Avoiding all non-essential outings and social gatherings

Please be confident that Mercy Circle

- Strives to combat the effects of isolation for all residents
- Monitors all residents who live in our healthcare settings for symptoms
- Screens all employees at the beginning of and during each shift
- Enforces the City of Chicago's travel restrictions to "hot spots" that now require a 14-day quarantine upon return from most States and Territories
- Advocates that all residents only leave the campus when medically necessary
 - Assisted living residents call Janet Tucker at extension 3650
 - Skilled nursing care residents call Anita Ajayi, RN, at extension 3664
- Applies all prescreening practices for all healthcare professionals and other essential visitors who enter the building
- Restricts all indoor visits by residents' family and friends as well as volunteers and other non-essential healthcare professionals

Across the country, the number of COVID-19 cases is rapidly climbing and breaking record-numbers set just the day prior. According to the CDC, Illinois is among the top five States with the most cases since the beginning of the pandemic.

I share this data with you as a reason to motivate all of us to exercise caution in all our daily activities. Today, Governor JB Pritzker announced 10,562 new confirmed and probable cases, compared with 10,951 new cases logged on Thursday, December 3. Illinois' seven-day positivity rate was 12.3 percent on Thursday, December 3, up from 11.8 percent on Thursday, November 26. And as of Saturday, November 28, the positivity rate for our 60655 zip code is higher at 15.2 percent.

Enjoy our campus while staying-at-home

We are fortunate to have many ways for residents to safely leave their apartments while staying on campus where they can observe social distancing and other precautions at a time when all Illinois citizens are asked to comply with Tier 3 mitigation guidelines.

Please consider for yourself and encourage others to

- Join a walking group organized by the Life Enrichment team
- Walk outside by yourself or ask for an escort so you can stroll around our spacious grounds on days when weather permits

- Walk the spacious hallways along the Illinois and Wisconsin rooms which the Sisters of Mercy kindly let residents enjoy
- Watch television with a small group of others in the Illinois Room
- Gather in the Gallagher Room on the second floor for activities, as well as in the Library and Living Room near the Reception Desk and the smaller living rooms on each floor to visit with each other, keeping socially distant and following the respective capacity limits
- Exercise in the Fitness Center, taking care of all cleaning requirements before you start and before you leave
- Make time for individual meditation and prayer in our Chapel, the Agatha O'Brien Room and the Meditation Room on the third floor of the skilled nursing care unit
- Ask a Life Enrichment team member to help plan virtual visits for residents with family and friends by sending a request to LifeEnrichment@MercyCircle.org
- Visit the Bistro for a breakfast or lunch meal, as well as snacks and drinks

The spirit of Advent

We will celebrate the second week of Advent with the

- Broadcast of Mass daily at 11am on Channel 8
- Special Advent prayer services airing on Channel 8 every Wednesday at 10am and 3pm, followed by Communion brought to residents who open their doors

We also hope you enjoy spending time in the Chapel and Agatha O'Brien Room where the season is represented by color, lights and music,

Request emails of letters, notices directly to your inbox

We continue to add more people to our new email distribution database. Please send your request to Communications@MercyCircle.org and write "Add my name" in the subject line.

Please call me at 773-253-3627 with your questions and suggestions.

Very truly yours,



Frances Lachowicz
Executive Director