



February 5, 2021

Dear Residents, Families and Staff Members,

We continue to move forward with plans to reopen more areas where residents can savor the joys of belonging to a community. With our second clinic last Saturday, 98 percent of our residents and 74 percent of our staff members are fully inoculated with the Moderna vaccine, and these numbers will increase with our final clinic on Saturday, February 27, 2021.

Such a thoughtful response, which exceeds all national averages, is a testament to how people who live and work at Mercy Circle understand what it means to be community. Yet even with this added protection against COVID-19 beginning to take effect during this week and next, the virus remains a threat.

We proceed with caution and optimism.

Test results for this week

On Thursdays and Fridays, we conduct the second series for bi-weekly testing required for all employees. As of 3pm today, we have tested 42 staff members and all have negative results. Yesterday, 39 of the 40 of those tested had negative outcomes.

On Thursday, February 4, one staff member, who is symptomatic and only came to our campus for mandated testing, received a positive result for COVID-19. The server, who works part-time in the dining rooms for independent and assisted living residents, had not been on our campus for 10 days.

This individual is recovering from the virus at home. The server, who tested positive on January 28, continues to recuperate at home. Both only will return to work in accordance with CDC standards. Respect their privacy by following HIPAA rules.

This week, all 57 residents in our healthcare settings again tested negative.

Starting the week of February 8, Mercy Circle moves to weekly, instead of biweekly, testing for employees thanks to the decreased positivity rate in Cook County now at 5.9 percent. We also will continue to conduct weekly tests for all residents in our healthcare settings.

Once Mercy Circle achieves 28 consecutive days with no new cases of COVID-19 among residents and staff members, residents only will be tested monthly but employees will continue to be tested weekly until Cook Country's positivity rate remains steady below 5 percent. ►

Illinois' Phase 4 with fewer restrictions

Governor JB Pritzker announced this week that all 11 Regions now are in Phase 4, a level which was last designated in June 2020.

Today, the Illinois Department of Public Health reported 3,660 new and probable cases of COVID-19, a slight increase from 3,328 cases registered on Thursday. Illinois' statewide positivity rate was 3.4 percent on Thursday.

Indicators for our neighborhood and the City of Chicago also confirm significant decreases in positivity rates for

- Our zip code 60655 that, as of January 30, fell to 5.7 percent from 8.51 percent seven days earlier
- The City of Chicago that, as of February 3, decreased to 5.2 percent from 6.3 percent in one week

Please note some statistics initially reported sometimes change as more data is received by government health agencies and account for differences with information provided in my previous letters.

Protection remains key to safety

We keep mitigating the spread of COVID-19 as our highest priority while we add more ways to enjoy the Mercy Circle way of life. Everyone must continue to

- Wear a face mask that covers both nose and mouth
- Practice six-foot social distancing in all situations
- Wash hands regularly
- Conform with Chicago's travel advisories
- Contact our Director of Nursing Anita Ajayi, RN, at 773-253-3664 for guidance on self-quarantining even if only leaving our campus for a brief time

Opportunities to connect, to ask for assistance

Make plans for 30-minute "window" visits at the west end of Mercy Hall between 1pm and 4pm on Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays. Please ask for another time if this schedule is not convenient.

- Two family members can sit inside the vestibule, separated by glass doors from where residents are seated. Bring your mobile phone to talk as you safely see each other.
- Contact LifeEnrichment@MercyCircle.org to schedule visits 48 hours in advance. A member will confirm your visit and prescreening process.

Paul May at 312-307-9043 and Marge Everett at extension 3606 are happy to assist with shopping for the basics by ordering online or picking up items for residents.



Dining rooms have been rearranged for a safe experience and signage facilitates social distancing.

- Independent living residents are being served between 4:30pm and 6pm from Monday through Saturday. The Bistro's hours remain the same.
- Assisted living residents can expect to get together for three meals a day beginning on or close to Wednesday, February 10.
- Memory care and skilled nursing care residents will resume eating in the dining room beginning on or close to February 10.

With Phase 4, Mercy Circle can offer activities with 10 or fewer residents. Please check residents' daily calendars for details.

Comfort from our faith

In-person prayer and Communion services for as many as 10 people soon will resume. We hope to reintroduce Mass in our Chapel before Ash Wednesday. Because seating is limited, residents also can participate by watching on Channel 1 or 7. Dates and times will be announced soon.

This past Wednesday's blessing of throats and a special intercession for healing as we celebrated the feast day of St. Blaise provided another source of encouragement. We also hope the prayer card you received will inspire our community's reflections on the Day of the Sick on February 11.

Contact me whenever you have questions and suggestions. Call 773-253-3627.

I look forward to more and more seeing you in our hallways and common areas.

Very truly yours,



Frances Lachowicz
Executive Director