



TO Residents, Families and Staff Members  
FROM Frances Lachowicz   
DATE December 24, 2021  
SUBJ One Resident, Four Staff Members Have Tested Positive for COVID-19

As you know from news reports, Illinois, including Chicago, is experiencing a record-breaking surge in the number of new cases of COVID-19 due to the velocity of transmissions attributed to the Omicron variant. On Thursday, the Illinois Department of Public Health reported 18,942 new cases, surpassing the number of the most new cases in a single day that was established more than a year ago in November 2020. This spike is not due to the fact that more people are being tested.

Thanks to the smart decisions and sustained commitment of our residents, staff members and third-party providers, Mercy Circle has armed itself to do its best to slow the spread of COVID-19. Even with our major precautions, we realize the number of new incidents of COVID-19 here will increase for the next several weeks.

### ***Regular testing for early detection***

Mercy Circle follows guidelines published by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services and by the Illinois Department of Public Health.

Currently, all residents in our healthcare settings as well as staff members and third-party providers are tested weekly. Independent living residents, who want to be tested, should contact the Receptionist at extension 3600. With so many people now asymptomatic, we value frequent testing to help slow the spread of COVID-19.

Results for “upon request” and our planned weekly sessions for rapid tests conducted here this week include

- Negative outcomes for all assisted living, memory care, rehab and skilled nursing care residents
- Positive results for
  - One independent living resident, who is asymptomatic, asked to be tested on Thursday after being exposed to someone with the virus; our resident is recovering at home here and remains isolated for 10 days
  - Two CNAs, who care for skilled nursing care residents, are asymptomatic: One staff member began to develop symptoms on Wednesday afternoon before starting work and our weekly testing protocol identified the second employee the same day

- One member of our administrative team, whose most recent workday was Monday, only came to our campus on Wednesday to comply with our testing protocol
- One EVS worker, who is symptomatic and had been absent for two days, called to request a test here this morning

All staff members wear appropriate PPE and adhere to infection control practices. These employees, now at home, will only return to work in accordance with CDC regulations. Please honor their privacy by following HIPAA guidelines.

### ***Being alert to signs and symptoms makes a difference***

We are a community of people who really put others' well-being at the top of our list. We also know that how we care for our own health affects everyone here.

If you or your guests suspect you are experiencing symptoms associated with the virus or learn you have been exposed to someone with COVID-19, please think about postponing your plans.

Thank you for considering more carefully every decision you make about spending time with others during this Christmastime—even when we have been looking forward to spending more time with each other as well as family and friends.

### ***Helpful reminders about taking precautions***

All services continue including activities, the beauty shop and communal dining.

- Ask your friends and family members, who are not vaccinated, to stay home and not visit during the Christmas holidays. Even though this is very disappointing, it is the right decision.
- Limit all gatherings to small groups in which everyone is vaccinated.
- Direct all guests to our *Visitor Guidelines* on Mercy Circle's website before planning a visit in a resident's apartment or suite.
- Increase your adherence to safety practices to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19.
  - Wear a tight-fitting mask that covers your nose and mouth
  - Wash your hands frequently
  - Observe social distancing in all common areas
  - Contact the reception desk and stay in your apartment if you think you may have symptoms or been exposed to someone with the virus
  - Request a test if you notice symptoms associated with COVID-19
  - Limit your time away from Mercy Circle
  - Avoid crowds



Please practice a low-risk lifestyle during this season with a major surge in the presence of COVID-19 in Chicago and Illinois and across the country. Encourage others to do the same. Call me at 773-253-3627 to discuss your suggestions and to ask your questions.

Please accept my Christmas blessings for you and everyone who is dear to you.