



## Q & A

### *Frequently Asked Questions about Saint Mary's and COVID-19*

*April 17, 2020*

**Q: Will families be notified if there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 within the facility?**

**A:** Yes. Families will be notified if there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 within our facility. The immediate course of action will involve isolating the individual, notifying public health officials, informing the individuals' family, informing other residents, families and staff, and identifying other cases of potential exposure.

**Q: How will you protect other residents and staff if there is a confirmed case?**

**A:** Should we have a confirmed case, we have the ability to secure and isolate portions of the skilled nursing units that will establish a dedicated area for COVID-19 patients. Residents would have private rooms and a private bathroom, as they do now. Dedicated staff with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) would care for the individuals in this area and would have a dedicated entrance/exit to the unit as well as the ability to shower and change. We are working with staff to determine ahead of time who would be appropriate and willing to work in this area should the need arise.

**Q: Why is there a camper outside of Asbury Ridge and not the East campus?**

**A:** We have set up a camper at Saint Mary's at Asbury Ridge as a precautionary measure in preparation for staff who may be working with COVID-19 patients in the dedicated isolation areas. The dedicated rooms for staff in these isolation areas do not have individual showers. The camper provides staff members with an area to shower and change before they go home. There is not a camper at Saint Mary's East because the dedicated rooms at the East campus have individual showers that staff can utilize. Providing staff with a way to shower and change after their shift helps to protect them and their family by limiting any potential transmission of the virus.

**Q: Are you still admitting new residents?**

**A:** Yes. Long-term care facilities have received direction that they should continue to accept new admissions and receive readmissions as they normally would to help alleviate the burden on hospitals, including individuals where a case of COVID-19 is or was present. We have new admission protocols in place help protect both the newly admitted resident and those already within the facility including other residents and staff.

**Q: How are you assessing your preparedness plan?**

**A:** We are required to adhere to many regulations and changing guidelines. To make sure we meet all the requirements, we are utilizing preparedness checklists and assessments specific to long-term care facilities as published by the CDC, CMS, and PA Department of Health. We are rigorously reviewing all of our protocols and have updated our Emergent Infectious Disease Outbreak plan to specifically address COVID-19. We have a team that meets on a regular basis to disseminate new information and implement our action plan.

**Q: How are you ensuring that there are enough staff to care for the residents?**

**A:** We are fortunate to have a dedicated workforce at Saint Mary's. However, as a precaution, we are also developing contingency staffing plans that prioritize essential services, identify non-essential services, and utilize non-direct care staff in certain support roles. CMS also recently issued a waiver relaxing certain regulations that will help address potential caregiver shortages while still providing high quality care. Should we need it, our campuses have a history of helping each other in times of need.

**Q: Are you having problems getting supplies?**

**A:** Saint Mary's maintains a stock of supplies such as medical items, dietary items and support items. We anticipated challenges with the supply chain and immediately began conserving our resources. Currently, we have an adequate supply of PPE (including N95 respirators, masks, gowns, face shields, gloves, etc.) and we are calculating the burn-rate for these items so that we can optimize their use. To ensure that we can continue to protect our staff and residents and maintain our supply, we are following the conservation guidelines as directed by the CDC. We are working tirelessly to secure additional products and find alternate solutions.

**Q: When will families be able to visit again?**

**A:** Unfortunately, we don't know how long this will last. Because of the at-risk population we serve, long-term care facilities may maintain some restrictions even if the restrictions for the general public are relaxed. We will be sure to let our families know as soon as possible once we receive new guidance from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) on re-opening visitation.

**Q: What are residents still able to do? Can they leave their rooms?**

**A:** We are working hard to meet the needs of our residents. Yes, residents can leave their room but they are directed to follow social distancing guidelines when doing so. Although group activities have been cancelled, there is still a number of things going on! For instance, exercise and daily Mass are being televised for resident participation and doorway trivia and bingo games are being held down hallways.

**Q: Why can't meals be delivered to residents in Independent Living/The Carriage Homes?**

**A:** At this time, individuals residing in the Carriage Homes continue to receive Maintenance and Groundskeeping services. Access to the Residential Dining Room and to Home Care services, such as Housekeeping, were suspended on March 14<sup>th</sup> when the facility closed to visitors and non-essential vendors. Unfortunately, we cannot offer meal delivery services as our staff is being asked to adjust their routines to ensure that residents who cannot live independently, such as those in skilled nursing and residential living, receive the services they require. These actions are taken to protect Carriage Home residents, staff and other residents.

**Q: Should families who are worried move their loved ones out of the community?**

**A:** Both the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the American Health Care Association (AHCA) do not currently recommend transferring residents. Moving the elderly often puts them more at risk and can have negative impacts. Remember that residents are likely in our care setting because they require higher levels of care than what can be provided at home. Ultimately however, the decision is up to the resident and their family.

