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Saint Mary's & COVID-19: Update #76

Hello all,

Hoping you all had a safe and happy New Year! Here's an update on where things stand at Saint Mary's as we enter 2022.

We are continuing to conduct outbreak testing due to positive cases at our facility. We have had a small number of employees test positive in the last two weeks and we did identify one resident case of COVID-19 in the Alzheimer's Unit. There has been no further spread identified among residents at this time. Visitation has continued throughout the facility. Visitors going into the Alzheimer's Unit have been required to wear appropriate PPE.

All visitors should continue to be aware of the potential risk of contracting and spreading COVID-19 when visiting the facility. Please remember that masks must be worn at all times by everyone in the building – even behind closed doors. Practicing proper hand hygiene and limiting travel through the building are efforts we all must continue to practice to help keep our residents safe; please continue to visit only in resident rooms and to not walk about the building.

The CDC's recent recommendation of shortened isolation times (for those who test positive and who do not have symptoms to isolate for 5-days followed by another 5-days of mask wearing) is guidance for the general public. This does not currently apply to or change anything in the healthcare setting. Therefore, if you have recently tested positive for COVID-19, you still must wait at least 14 days before returning to our campus. Please do not visit if you have any symptoms or are not feeling well. Even if it's not COVID-19, we still want to keep our community healthy and protect against the Flu and other illnesses. FaceTime and video visits continue to be a great option to stay connected!

Our vaccination rates at Saint Mary's remain steady with some slow improvements. While numbers continue to show an 81% acceptance rate among our employees, about 19 additional employees have received their first-dose and are on their way to being fully vaccinated. 96% of residents are fully vaccinated.

Today, the Supreme Court is hearing oral arguments regarding the legal challenges faced by the OSHA Emergency Temporary Standard (ETS) and the CMS Vaccine Mandate. In the meantime, the decision of the lower courts puts these rulings back in effect. The OSHA ETS is set to take effect on January 10th and essentially requires workplaces with 100+ employees to test their

unvaccinated staff on a regular basis in order to continue to work. Saint Mary's already has such a testing policy in place. The CMS vaccine mandate may again be enforced in the 25 states not facing injunctions (PA is not under an injunction) and the date for initial compliance has been moved to January 27th. This mandate impacts all staff and those who work in facilities that receive Medicare and Medicaid funding. For Saint Mary's, this means that unvaccinated staff must obtain a first-dose or an exemption by January 27th to continue to work. By the end of February, staff must be fully vaccinated to continue to work (or have been granted an exemption) or they will be considered to have voluntarily terminated their employment. Requests for medical accommodations and sincerely held religious exemptions are continuing to be reviewed but more guidance from CMS is needed on how to grant those accommodations.

With the positivity rate in Erie County still above 15% and high transmission rates, please continue to use good judgement and be cautious when visiting Saint Mary's and when in the greater community – wear your mask, wash your hands and watch your distance!