



SAINT MARY'S AT ASBURY RIDGE

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Saint Mary's & COVID-19: Update #71

Good Afternoon!

It's been awhile since our last update – here is some insight into what's been going on at Saint Mary's.

Saint Mary's at Asbury Ridge currently has zero (0) cases of COVID-19. Routine testing is occurring twice a week among all unvaccinated employees and any resident who has had outside exposure. At the corporate office for Saint Mary's Home of Erie, however, one (1) employee tested positive last week. As there was no crossover or exposure to anyone at the main campus, this does not affect Saint Mary's at Asbury Ridge. Employees at the corporate office have been tested following the guidelines for outbreak testing.

Many of you may remember hearing a lot about the county positivity rate in past updates. The frequency of routine testing no longer depends on the county positivity rate, which is now over 10%, but on county transmission. The levels of transmission are categorized into four groups – low, moderate, substantial and high. Currently, Erie County is reporting a high level of transmission.

We know there has been a lot of information in the news on vaccines, vaccine mandates, and boosters. Saint Mary's continues to track and report our vaccination status weekly; as of last week 97% of residents and 81% of employees are vaccinated. A number of weeks ago, the Biden Administration announced an initiative to mandate COVID-19 vaccinations for employees working in long-term care facilities. The [Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services \(CMS\)](#) is developing the regulation regarding this announcement, but the official ruling has not been issued. CMS initially said the rule would come out in late September and now we are told to expect the rule in October.

Little is known about the details of the pending regulation and questions are abundant. We are preparing staff by identifying those who might be impacted by the mandate and continuing to educate and offer information on the benefits of vaccination to those who are vaccine hesitant.

Booster shots add another element to the mix. The FDA and the CDC have announced that COVID-19 booster shots for Pfizer-BioNTech (now named Comirnaty) are approved and available for recipients who are 65+, 18+ with underlying conditions, or 18+ who work in high-risk settings.

Saint Mary's is in contact with Walgreens to offer booster shots to our residents and employees who have received both doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech. We do not have information yet on when this might occur, but clinics similar to the initial vaccination clinics held on our campus in January are in the works. A booster shot is not required to be considered fully vaccinated, but [studies show](#) that initial vaccine protection against the virus may decrease over time and be less able to protect against the Delta variant. We will keep families and residents advised of these details.

Next week, Saint Mary's will begin our annual influenza vaccination program by administering the flu vaccine to employees and residents. Historically, we've had a high participation rate and have been very successful in controlling the spread of communicable disease due to this infection control program. If you have any questions about the influenza vaccine in regards to your loved one, please discuss it with the Nursing Supervisor.

Menus and October activity calendars to follow. Thank you!