



SAINT MARY'S AT ASBURY RIDGE

*This communication was sent in an email on November 19, 2021.*

#### **Saint Mary's & COVID-19: Update #74**

Hello!

A lot to cover in this update. With the holidays approaching, the Erie County positivity rate now above 15%, and some changes made to the CMS Nursing Home visitation guidelines, now is a good time to review the policies and procedures in place at Saint Mary's that families and visitors need to know.

First, two (2) employees were identified as positive for COVID-19 today both of whom recently worked in the building. We are conducting outbreak testing throughout the facility of all residents and employees.

On November 12<sup>th</sup>, CMS issued a revision to former guidance in light of the impact of COVID-19 vaccinations and the toll of separation. The guidance essentially states that visitation is now allowed for all residents at all times. As you are aware, Saint Mary's has been open to visitors for some time with some limitations and restrictions. So what does this revised guidance change?

The most vital thing to know is that all of the core infection prevention principles remain in place and must be adhered to at all times by everyone in the building. Visitors who do not adhere may be asked to leave. The core principles include: frequent hand hygiene, universal masking (covering mouth and nose) at all times regardless of vaccination status, social distancing of at least six feet or more, screening upon entry, educational signage, proper use of PPE by staff, and not visiting if you have tested positive for COVID-19, have symptoms of COVID-19 or meet quarantine criteria.

All visits must still occur in the resident room and are not to take place in common areas (lobby, dining rooms, etc.). Visitors should still limit their movement throughout the facility. The revised guidance changes the following so long as the core principles can be maintained and the visit does not increase risk to other residents: residents quarantined in yellow zones and COVID-19 positive residents in red zones may have visitors, visitation can continue if there is an outbreak and during outbreak testing, visitation is no longer limited (i.e., the number of visitors, visiting hours, scheduling visits, etc.), and finally that communal activities, dining and outings among residents may occur. Residents in yellow or red zones will still be quarantined from the rest of the facility until they meet the release criteria. While it is safer for visitors not to visit in the above scenarios, if the visitor is aware of and accepts the risk of contracting COVID-19 they will not be prevented from doing so.

Although there is no longer a limit on the number of visitors that a resident can receive, visitors still must follow the distancing requirements. So, if you and your extended family wish to visit your loved over Thanksgiving, you must be able to maintain a distance of six feet between the resident and all visitors when in the resident room. If distancing cannot be maintained, you may need to stagger when family members or friends visit.

Communal activities, dining and outings may occur as long as the core principles are followed. For instance, this would allow residents to attend Mass in the chapel so long as they wear a mask and can distance; but it does not yet open this up to family members or visitors to join in activities with the resident as this would constitute a visit in a common area. Residents can leave the facility on outings as they choose and all involved should adhere to the core principles of masking, hand hygiene and distancing. We know many families may wish to take their loved one out for Thanksgiving and so long as the core principles are followed, there are no issues.

Some of these changes to the communal activity guidance and visitation policies will impact Carriage Home residents – Carriage Home residents will receive a follow up email with more details about the ability to return to Mass and utilizing amenities.

Finally, please be reminded that when we say facemasks are required at all times, we mean all times. If you are in a resident room behind closed doors you must wear your facemask, even if all present are vaccinated. While this may be addressed differently at times when the transmission rates are low, this is particularly important and necessary right now due to the high positivity and transmission rates occurring in Erie County at this time.

As always, we're happy to answer any questions you may have and are grateful for your cooperation and understanding. Thank you!