



SAINT MARY'S AT ASBURY RIDGE

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

Saint Mary's & COVID-19: Update #69

Good Afternoon,

Yesterday, COVID-19 testing of unvaccinated employees was conducted at Asbury Ridge and all results were negative.

The positivity rate of Erie County, as reported by CMS on August 16th, has now risen to 7.6%. On August 2nd, the positivity rate was only at 3.3% - the rise is concerning.

This increase means a few things for us at Saint Mary's. First, it moves us into the next threshold (between 5-10%) which dictates the frequency of COVID-19 testing. Testing will now be conducted on a weekly basis. All unvaccinated employees and any resident who has had outside exposure in the last 14 days will be included in weekly testing. For residents, outside exposure means a variety of things: a doctor's appointment, a trip like lunch outside the building, or interacting with a visitor. Second, the increased positivity rate means that Saint Mary's will be limiting facility sponsored outings. Activity outings such as scenic drives, where residents do not have exposure to the public, can continue at this time.

If you have visited recently, you may have noticed there is an additional question on the AccuShield Kiosk when you sign-in. We are required to inform visitors of the risk of contracting and transmitting COVID-19 through activities such as visiting a nursing home; this question is simply asking visitors to acknowledge that they are aware of that risk.

We continue to urge and educate employees on the benefit of vaccination. Yesterday, the Biden Administration announced that nursing home staff will be required to be vaccinated against COVID-19 in order for the facility to continue to receive Medicare and Medicaid funding.

The official ruling from CMS (Centers for Medicare and Medicaid) regarding this directive has not yet been released – this will likely outline the timeline in which this needs to happen and provide more details on whether there are exemptions. Saint Mary's believes that vaccines are the best means of fighting COVID-19, supported with masking and social distancing. However, we also believe that such a mandate should apply to all of healthcare, including hospitals and home care.

Why? Like many businesses, Saint Mary's is experiencing staffing challenges and we have concerns that a mandate would drive employees away to other facilities without such a mandate. Furthermore, we feel strongly that residents who are coming and going from other

healthcare facilities like hospitals should have the same level of confidence that the staff caring for them in a hospital are vaccinated, as they would when they are being cared for in our facility.

Currently, around 76% of the staff at Saint Mary's are already vaccinated – this number is slowly growing as we do have some partially vaccinated employees who are in the process of becoming fully vaccinated. The health and safety of our residents, employees and community is and always will be at the core of what we do and at the heart of our decisions.

We will keep you informed of any policy changes. Thank you!