

March 12, 2021

Hello Everyone,

Here is my weekly update for all of you.

Today all residents were tested by the national guard; we should have results coming in starting Saturday late afternoon. If we have no positive cases, we will be able to come out of “outbreak” status starting on Sunday. For now, I have to report that we continue to be in “outbreak” status; and in Phase 0.

The following continues to be in place:

- We will continue to check for symptoms on all residents three times a day.
- All residents are on precautions: no group activities; no dining in groups, and except for window or compassionate visits.
- All staff continues to be screened before entering the facility.
- Staff are in full PPE (personal protective equipment) on all floors.
- We continue to test all staff twice a week.
- We are closed to new admissions.

If we come out of outbreak status on Sunday the following would be put in place:

- We will continue to check for symptoms on all residents three times a day.
- All staff will continue to be screened before entering the facility.
- **NEW:** All staff will be PCR tested weekly.
- All staff will be wearing surgical mask at all times throughout the facility.
- All staff will be wearing eye protection on the resident/patient units.
- All residents on all floors will be encouraged to stay 6’ apart and wear mask.
- **NEW:** Residents will be allowed to attend group dining, daily mass, and activities as long as they stay 6’ apart (no limit on number of residents together as long as they can maintain 6’ distancing).
- The annex will continue to be our holding zone for incoming rehab patients needing to be on a 14-day quarantine. **NEW:** If the incoming patient has been fully vaccinated, they no longer have to be placed on a 14-day quarantine.

Positivity Rates:

As I mentioned in my last update, we learned that the state positivity rates did not match CMS’s positivity rates. This week the county positivity rates have been updated and as you can see we have a new color for all of our counties – gray. On the CMS website at the top of the CMS spreadsheet, it indicates that New Hampshire and South Carolina counties did not submit data

and that if the state does not submit data we should use the state percentages. So even though there are percentages in the CMS spreadsheet, we apparently are to use the state percentages. Confusing? I agree.

The state percentages are very different as you can see. But we cannot compare apples to apples. CMS data uses a 14 day % positivity rate and New Hampshire calculates it on a 7-day period. Also, New Hampshire separates Nashua and Manchester out of the county. According to the New Hampshire data, everyone is still above the 50 cases per 100,000 it takes to move beyond phase 1. Looks like it could be awhile for most facilities to get to phase 2.

Using the state data, all of our counties are below 10% and therefore may have social visitation as well as compassionate care visits. The New Hampshire map still has all counties in the state with substantial community transmission. This is another really big and sudden change.

CMS Positivity Table:

Belknap County, NH	33001 NH	1	61,303	Micropolitan	940	1,533	6.2%	Gray
Carroll County, NH	33003 NH	1	48,910	Non-core	712	1,456	11.1%	Gray
Cheshire County, NH	33005 NH	1	76,085	Micropolitan	1,554	2,042	13.8%	Gray
Coos County, NH	33007 NH	1	31,563	Micropolitan	494	1,565	6.3%	Gray
Grafton County, NH	33009 NH	1	89,886	Micropolitan	1,878	2,089	16.2%	Gray
Hillsborough County, NH	33011 NH	1	417,025	Medium metro	6,192	1,485	12.5%	Gray
Merrimack County, NH	33013 NH	1	151,391	Micropolitan	2,072	1,369	9.5%	Gray
Rockingham County, NH	33015 NH	1	309,769	Large fringe metro	4,036	1,303	14.0%	Gray
Strafford County, NH	33017 NH	1	130,633	Large fringe metro	2,022	1,548	18.8%	Gray
Sullivan County, NH	33019 NH	1	43,146	Micropolitan	661	1,532	9.8%	Gray

New Hampshire Positivity Table:

County	7 day % positivity	Cases per 100,00 14-day period
Belknap	3.0%	191.7
Carroll	4.9%	258
Cheshire	2.4%	347.7
Coos	6.0%	284
Grafton	1.2%	335
Rest of Hillsborough	4.1%	249
Merrimack	3.8%	198
Rockingham	5.1%	267
Strafford	4.6%	336
Sullivan	2.6%	157
Manchester	4.6%	330
Nashua	3.1%	195

Vaccine News – In-House Vaccination Program:

The state of New Hampshire will be providing allocated doses of vaccine to pharmacies that service long term care facilities who wish to be providers for vaccine. Pharmerica, the pharmacy that we are contracted with is one of the pharmacies that is currently set up as vaccine provider. The next step for us at the facility level is to apply to be a vaccine provider; once our application is approved the process should begin.

Although this has not yet started at any facility, the vision for the vaccination process is as follows. Initially the Pfizer vaccine will be allocated to long-term care facilities. This is because it was the one that was previously used in facilities as well as there are only 5-6 doses per vial. Due to the fear of wasting doses, it was important that the vaccine allotted to us had a low number of doses per vial. Once these vials are prepared they are only good for 6 hours. This means on the date we schedule to administer our 5-6 doses we will have to ensure the residents and staff are in the building and receive it during the 6-hour window. There is some talk that the Johnson and Johnson vaccine may become available in the future but not at this point.

Visitation - New CMS/CDC Guidance for Visitation:

Both CMS and CDC came out with new guidance on 3/10/21 and 3/11/21 respectively. Both pretty much mirror one another. The actual guidance is quite lengthy; therefore, I have put together some bullet points to review which will have the greatest impact on us.

According to the updated guidance, facilities should allow responsible indoor visitation at all times and for all residents, regardless of vaccination status of the resident, or visitor, unless certain scenarios arise that would limit visitation; example; a resident in quarantine, whether vaccinated or unvaccinated, until they have met criteria for release from quarantine.

So, what does this mean for us? The guidelines I sent out to you earlier in the week with regards to the revised definition of compassionate visits will be utilized for the new responsible indoor visit protocol.

Visits still need to be scheduled, limited to 2 visitors per resident at one time, with an overall limit on total number of visitors in the facility at one time. For now, starting on Tuesday of next week we will be allowing for 2 “visit slots” at one time, or a maximum total of 4 visitors in the facility at any one time.

The online portal will allow for three options of visit types, they will be window, indoor room visit, or indoor lobby visit. You should select the option that is best suited to you, however, in each specific time slot only two total visits can be scheduled and only one of each type. So, if someone has already scheduled an in room visit for the 930am time slot, the other 930am time slot choice selection will be limited to indoor visit in lobby or a window visit. Of note; CMS guidance is encouraging that outdoor visits be the option of choice, but for now because of weather, we will be utilizing the inside visit.

The lobby visit will be similar to what we were doing in the fall with the tables set up in lobby with the privacy curtains.

It is important to note that the new guidance still requires that both the resident and visitor(s) maintain their well fitted mask at all times during all indoor visits without exception. We, in addition to requiring masks, will continue to have visitors wearing the PPE that the facility is requiring for staff (if it is being required). In an outbreak phase, full PPE is required; in other phases, it will be determined by the county transmission rates. If the rates of transmission are moderate to substantial, eye protection and masks will be required. Hand washing or use of hand sanitizer for both visitors and resident are required for all visits.

Please keep in mind with regards to the limitations of visitation in the case of when a facility may return to outbreak phase, other than to say indoor visitation can still occur on units where no cases have been identified. This is a change from previous guidance where the entire facility was affected regardless of the location of the virus.

On one of our previous zoom meetings the question was raised with regards to what does the vaccination get us? In this current guidance, we do see an advantage for residents who have been fully vaccinated. The advantage is that these individuals, if they choose, while wearing their well fitted facemask and practicing hand hygiene before and after the visit, **may have physical contact with their visitor(s), this includes hugs.** 😊 This is regardless of the vaccination status of the visitor.

Unvaccinated residents will not be allowed physical contact with their visitor(s), at this time. However, we still have the “hugging station” set up in the lobby that we could utilize for unvaccinated residents and their families if one is requested during a lobby visit.

Visitors going to the floors will be escorted and will only be able to interact with their family member. Visitors are to maintain 6 feet socially distanced from all other staff members and other residents of the facility.

These changes that have been made are a **huge step** in getting us back to normal, but at the same time makes us feel a little uneasy. With that being said, we are encouraging all visitors to be vaccinated against COVID 19, but vaccination is not required in order to visit. I hope everyone coming into the facility will be open and honest as to their status before entering; we have a lot of precious lives to safeguard. We will be providing on the spot antigen testing for COVID 19 before all visits to help identify someone that might be positive before they have access to our vulnerable population.

Reminder:

Guidelines for visitation have changed rapidly this week and are subject to additional or revised changes at any time. I will keep you update as we learn of anything new.

ZOOM Meeting:

Our next zoom meeting will be on March 25th at 6pm mark your calendars.

Have a good week,

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