

November 19, 2021

Hello Everyone,

Everything continues to run at “normal”. I mention in my 2nd letter to you last week that I would get back to you with more information on visitation. Well most this week has been trying to sort out how we will move forward with the new CMS regulation. We had a call today with DDHS but it didn’t really add to much clarification to what we already suspected the change to bring. I am including at the bottom of this newsletter information from a draft policy that CCNH is working on.

Thank you to those that joined us on the family zoom call last night. One of the questions raised was about taking residents out for Thanksgiving Day. The answer is yes however, there are protocols you will need to follow to ensure a safe experience. If this is something you think you would like to do please the bottom of the visitation guideline below.

We will not be offering a meal for family’s on Thanksgiving Day but you can bring food into the facility and eat with your loved in the room one **IF** you are vaccinated. If you are not vaccinated, you are not allowed to take your mask off during the visit. If this is something you would like to do please contact Barbra (activities) for more information.

We received the Pfizer booster vaccine yesterday, several staff and residents.

The following interventions and actions continue to be in place:

- Approved unvaccinated staff continue to wear an N95 mask, surgical mask and eye protection at all times and in all resident/patient care areas.
- All other staff are wearing a surgical mask and eye protection at all times and in all resident/patient care areas.
- We screen all staff, visitors, vendors, and other healthcare providers upon entering the building.
- All residents are assessed for signs and symptoms of Covid-19, 2 times a day and if there is a noticeable change in their condition.
- We test all approved non-vaccinated staff two times per week per state guidelines

NH Transmission Rate:

New Hampshire remains in the **RED** zone for transmission rate.

Visitation Guidelines (DRAFT):

Once our new receptionists are on board, we will go back to our pre-COVID visiting hours of 9am to 8pm 7-days a week. Until then they will remain 9am – 4:30pm. However, you can visit

outside of these hours by calling the floor directly to set up a visit or by coming to the side entrance door. Ring the doorbell and someone from the 2nd floor will let you in (please be patient especially during dinner hour of 5-6pm as all staff are serving meals at this time).

PURPOSE

It is the policy of Catholic Charities New Hampshire to continue adherence to evolving CMS and CDC visitation guidelines for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Nursing homes have been severely impacted by COVID-19, with outbreaks causing high rates of infection, morbidity, and mortality. The vulnerable nature of the nursing home population combined with the inherent risks of congregate living in a healthcare setting have required aggressive efforts to limit the spread of COVID – 19 within CCNH nursing facilities.

Visitation was halted in March 2020 during the beginning phases of the pandemic. and has been gradually easing since that time, with visitation restrictions in a systematic phased re-opening.

While CMS guidance has focused on protecting nursing home residents from COVID-19, it recognizes that physical separation from loved ones has taken a toll on both residents and their families. Many residents have felt socially isolated, leading to increased risk for depression, anxiety, expressions of distress and physical decline. Nursing home residents derive value from the physical, emotional, and spiritual support they receive through visitation from family and friends. Millions of people, including the majority of nursing home residents and staff, have been vaccinated since the most restrictive visitation guidance and subsequent revisions were put into place. Catholic Charities New Hampshire vaccine mandate went into effect September 13th, 2021 requiring all staff to have received at least one of the mRNA vaccines or the one Janssen J& J vaccine by that date, with full vaccination achieved by October 31, 2021 unless a committee approved exemption was granted.

On November 12, 2021 CMS revised visitation guidance for all nursing homes. This guidance supersedes all previous issued guidance and recommendations. All CCNH nursing facilities will implement the newly released visitation guidelines.

The revised guidelines Per 42 CFR 483.10 (f) (4)

Facilities must allow indoor visitation at all times, for all residents. Facilities may not limit the frequency, length of visits, number of visitors or require advance scheduling of visits.

Facilities must ensure adherence to core principles of infection control and that the visits do not pose a risk to other residents.

Facilities must ensure physical distancing can be maintained at peak times of visitation such as during meal times, after business hours and weekends or holidays. Therefore, it is always appreciated when visitors notify the facility prior to coming during peak times, so private visitation can be arranged without compromising other residents.

Visitation may be conducted through different means based on a facility's structure and resident needs, such as in resident rooms, dedicated visitation spaces and outdoors. Visitation will be allowed in semi-private rooms based on the following:

- The resident's roommate is vaccinated and not significantly immunocompromised
- The roommate agrees to the visit
- There are only enough visitors in the room to maintain social distancing
- All the visitors wear masks at all times
- Only one resident at a time may have visitors in the room
- Outdoor visits are always preferred, especially if the visitors are not vaccinated, weather permitting
- If the roommate is immunocompromised, or not vaccinated, and the health status of the resident prevents the resident from leaving the room, the facility will make every attempt to enable in-room visitation while adhering to infection control principles, if possible.
- Compassionate care visits are allowed at all times. There are few scenarios where a resident should not have open visitation. If a resident is severely immunocompromised and visitation must be limited, compassionate care visits are always allowed at any time.
- Ombudsman, and advocacy visits under the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights visits are always allowed. If such a visit is to occur when the resident is in isolation or quarantine, or when community transmission is high, the resident and Ombudsman must be made aware of the risk and the visit must take place in the resident room. The facility will facilitate alternative methods of visitation if requested by the resident or Ombudsman.
- Interpreters to facilitate communication must be allowed with adequate safety measures in place, such as adherence to the core principles of infection control.
- All healthcare workers and providers must be allowed entry as long as they are following safety measures consistent with this guidance.

All visitors will be screened prior to entering the facility using the visitor screening log. Visitors who are positive for COVID-19, display signs and symptoms of COVID-19, or meet the criteria for quarantine will not be allowed entry into the facility.

All visitors will receive education on the core principles of infection control and the risks associated with visitation.

Visitors who are unable to follow the core principles of infection prevention will not be allowed to enter the facility, will be asked to leave during the visit and/or may be prohibited from future visits if non-compliance with principles of infection control continue.

If a visitor is unable to follow infection control guidelines due to cognitive impairment, or other reasons that is not intentional disregard of the guidelines, the visitor will be asked to have

someone accompany them during future visits. The facility may assist with this by contacting other family members, or the facility reserves the right to monitor such visits.

VISITOR SCREENING

- No visitor will be allowed entry prior to being screened and evaluated.
- A fresh medical mask will be given to the visitor
- Education about the risk of the visit will be provided at the time of the visit. This education may be specific based on who they are visiting and the risk for that person
- Screening and education provided will be documented on the visitor screening log.

CORE PRINCIPLES of INFECTION CONTROL (must be adhered to at all times)

- Hand hygiene (use of alcohol gel is preferred)
- Face covering or mask covering nose and mouth and physical distancing at least 6 feet between people in accordance with CDC guidelines. **(The facility will provide a fresh medical mask to each visitor. Use of cloth masks or masks worn into the facility by the visitor are not accepted as there is no way of knowing the cleanliness, or when the mask was last changed).**
- During high transmission, masks will be required at all times while in the facility with one exception. If the resident and visitors are vaccinated and understand the risks involved, they may remove their masks and have close contact while they are in a private visiting location, but not in a shared room while a roommate is present, if the resident is not severely immunocompromised.
- Though not recommended and unvaccinated resident may only remove a mask and have physical contact with a designated support person, while participating in end of life religious practices, or an end of life visit.
- In times of high community transmission, eye protection will be available if the visitor requests it but it's not required.
- During moderate or low community transmission it is still safest to wear masks and physically distance. Regardless of community transmission, masks must be worn in any area of the facility that is not the visiting location.
- Instructional signage throughout the facility and proper visitor education on COVID-19 symptoms, use of face coverings/masks, infection control precautions, and other facility practices such as specific entry and exits to designated units, hand hygiene.
- Cleaning and disinfecting high-frequency touched surfaces in the facility often, and designated visiting areas after each visit.
- Appropriate staff use of PPE
- Effective cohorting of residents (such as separate areas dedicated to COVID-19 care)
- Resident and staff testing conducted as required per QSO-20-38—NH

VISITATION GUIDANCE

Visitation should be person centered, consider the residents' physical, mental, and psychosocial well-being, supporting their quality of life.

The transmission risk can be reduced by use of plexiglass barriers, screens, curtains, and/or dividers. Visits should be conducted with a degree of privacy. They should not take place in a large room with multiple visits happening at the same time. There may need to be multiple visiting locations spread throughout the facility combined with room visits. The facility will have a plan for visitation that includes times of increased visitors to ensure the visits are conducted safely with limited exposure to other residents or other visitors.

Visitation is allowed at all times per the residents and visitor needs. However, Catholic Charities nursing facilities always considers safety a top priority for all of our residents, visitors and staff. For this reason, the facility may suggest some visiting hours and may discourage certain times of the day, such as during meals (12-1 and 5-6), unless the resident eats in his/her room and does not have a roommate. Per CMS guidelines, visitors are not able to socialize with other residents and visitors, so visits will not be allowed in a communal area when other residents are present.

Visitors are not allowed to attend group activities for the same reason.

While not recommended, residents on quarantine or isolation may have visitors, as long as the visitors are educated about the possible risks. During such visits resident and visitors are required to wear masks at all times.

VISITATION DURING COVID-19 OUTBREAK

When a new case of COVID -19 is identified the facility immediately begins outbreak testing in accordance with CMS and CDC guidelines. (QSO 20-38-NH REVISED).

While it is safest to not have visitors in the facility during an outbreak investigation, visitors must still be allowed and educated about the potential risk associated with visiting, if they are able to maintain core principles of infection control and wear proper PPE designated by the facility. This should ideally be discussed with the visitor prior to coming to the facility. During an outbreak the facility may choose to request, though not require, advance notice of the visit so that education and PPE can be provided and the visitor can make an informed decision about the risks associated with the visit.

VISITOR TESTING and VACCINATION

While not required, CCNH facilities will continue to offer COVID-19 testing to all visitors, as feasible, especially during times of substantial or high community transmission. Alternatively, facilities may advise, in their communications with families, that they self- test within 2 or 3 days prior to the visit.

Visitors are strongly encouraged to be vaccinated for the safety of their loved one, other residents, themselves and our staff. Visitors will be asked about vaccination status during the screening process, but are not required to be tested or vaccinated or show proof of their vaccination status or test result. IF a visitor declines to disclose their vaccination status they must wear a mask at all times during the visit as it must be assumed they are not vaccinated.

COMMUNAL DINING and ACTIVITIES

Communal dining and activities are allowed while adhering to the core principles of infection control. Masks should be worn by residents during communal activities while the community transmission is substantial or high, except while eating. Visitors are not permitted at communal activities or dining.

RESIDENTS LEAVING THE FACILITY

Residents may leave the facility as they choose. When a resident is going on an outing, the resident and the person accompanying the resident should be reminded to follow the core principles of infection control, including wearing masks, physical distancing, hand hygiene, and any other applicable measures specific to the resident or the outing location and type of event.

Upon return to the facility:

- Resident will be screened for symptoms of COVID-19 and tested
- Resident will have additional testing at facility discretion based on the risk level of the outing attended.
- If resident or family report possible close contact to an individual with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 place the resident on 14-day quarantine if not fully vaccinated.
- Should the resident develop symptoms of COVID-19 during the 14-day period post outing, place the resident on isolation regardless of vaccination status.
- The facility may consider quarantining, at their discretion, unvaccinated residents who leave the facility, based on an assessment of risk, if uncertainty exists about their adherence or the adherence of those around them to recommended infection prevention measures.
- Residents who leave the facility for 24 hours or longer should generally be managed as a new admission or readmission, as recommended by CDC's Interim Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations to Prevent SARS-Co-V-2 Spread in Nursing Homes

Past News Letters/Other Info:

- ✓ News letters are posted on our web site under COVID Updates.
<https://mtcarmelrehabcenter.org/covid-19-update/> .
- ❖ The reporting method for the current level of Community Transmission in the state via the CDC's reporting system is now color-coded; Gray = No Data, **Blue** = Low Transmission, **Yellow** = Moderate Transmission, **Orange** = Substantial Transmission, **Red** = High Transmission: If this type of info interest you please go to:

https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#cases_community for more information.

Monthly ZOOM Meeting:

Our next zoom meeting will be this coming Thursday, December 16th at 6pm, mark your calendars; an invite will go out prior to that meeting.

Hiring:

We have hired 2 receptionists for evenings and weekends but are still looking for a part-time fill in. We also have openings in housekeeping, dietary and nursing. Please spread the word 😊

Go To:

<https://recruiting.paylocity.com/Recruiting/Jobs/All/1a2915aa-7fbd-4325-96f0-1ace5d58d007/New-Hampshire-Catholic-Charities?location=All%20Locations&department=Mt.%20Carmel>

Have a great week,

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