



TO: Mill Street Tenants & Family Members
From: Mick Siems, Director
DATE: January 26, 2021
RE: COVID vaccine, visitation update, MDH guidelines

Dear Mill Street Tenants & Family Members,

COVID Vaccine – As many across the country await access to the COVID vaccine, we at Mill Street are fortunate to have already received (or are in the process of receiving) our vaccinations. To date, 29 of our employees have received both doses of the vaccine. All of our current tenants have received their first dose, along with 26 Essential Caregivers. We have scheduled Thursday, February 11th from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM to administer the 2nd dose to our tenants and Essential Caregivers.

The process for becoming an Essential Caregiver is pretty simple. Documentation of a negative COVID test is required prior to your first visit. Once you have that in place you can contact Tara (218-736-8558) or Jake (218-739-6827) to schedule an orientation. We then require documentation of a negative COVID test at a minimum every two weeks. If you would like to take part in our weekly testing you are welcome to do so. Our testing dates are Mondays from 4:00 to 5:00 PM and Tuesdays from 9:00 to 10:00 AM.

Essential Caregivers are allowed to come daily with visits lasting up to three hours in length. The hours are from 9:00 AM to 6:00 PM most week days and from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM one Saturday per month. Pre-scheduling a visit is required by calling Jake (218-739-6827), with a 24-hour advance notice preferred. The limitation of one Essential Caregiver per tenant is no longer in place.

Visitation Update - We continue to follow the guidelines from the MN Department of Health related to in-house visitation. This guidance requires that the facility be COVID-free, including both tenants and staff, for 14 continuous days before in-house visitation is allowed. The positivity rate in the county also needs to be below 10% for two continuous weeks. We have met both of these parameters and have re-opened in-house visitation. Visits are limited to 45-minutes in length in a designated location, which is our private dining room. Again, pre-scheduling a visit is required by calling Jake (218-739-6827), with a 24-hour advance notice preferred. No more than three visitors per tenant are allowed at one time.

MDH Guidelines - The COVID-19 pandemic has affected long-term care facilities, which include skilled nursing and assisted living facilities, more than any other setting.

Those who live and work here have been charged with following public health recommendations that can help reduce the spread and impact of the virus.

So with the vaccinations that are taking place, how soon will it be before these recommendations are lifted? Before MDH recommendations can change, we need to learn more about the protection that COVID-19 vaccines provide after a full vaccine series is completed. We do not know yet if, or the rate at which, people still get infected after they are vaccinated, or if they can spread the virus without feeling sick or having symptoms. Because not all members of the community have had COVID-19 and even fewer have been vaccinated, many residents in supervised group living and health care workers may still be at risk for infection. Until we know that vaccinated health care workers and residents cannot spread the virus to others, the current MDH guidelines need to be followed.

Isolation and quarantine

At this point, the requirements of a 10-day isolation for positive COVID tests and a 14-day quarantine for possibly exposed health care workers and residents have not changed, even if the person has received one or two doses of COVID-19 vaccine. This includes quarantine for health care workers and residents after an exposure and residents after admission or re-admission to the facility.

Personal protective equipment (PPE)

Until more data is collected and the CDC updates its guidance, all health care workers and community members must continue to take the same preventive measures as they did prior to vaccination (i.e., wearing a mask in the community, social distancing, hand hygiene). These measures are intended to protect others as well as yourself.

Testing

Testing at Mill Street will continue as currently recommended by state or federal guidelines, regardless of vaccination status for individual residents or health care workers or of the proportion of people vaccinated in the facility.

- Test all residents and health care workers with symptoms.
- Test a random sampling of residents.
- Continue to test all staff on a weekly basis.
- Perform outbreak testing when a new COVID-19 infection is found in a resident, health care worker, or a visiting service provider that worked in the facility while infectious. Rounds of outbreak testing should be repeated every three to seven days, until no new cases of COVID-19 infection are found in health care workers or residents for at least 14 days.

Screening

The screening of residents, health care workers, and visitors for signs and symptoms of illness will continue even after vaccination. There have been no changes to the recommendations for screening for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 in health care facilities, including long-term care facilities. No health care worker should work with fever or symptoms of acute illness, regardless of whether it is caused by COVID-19 or another illness.

Visitation

Facilities need to continue to follow MDH and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) guidance around visitation. Facilities where someone has tested positive for COVID-19 within the past 14 days, or in counties where more than 10% of all people tested in a 14-day period test positive for the virus, must not allow broad visitation outside of compassionate care visits, regardless of vaccination status of health care workers, residents, and visitors.

As always, the health and well-being of both our staff and our tenants continues to be our highest priority. If you have any questions or concerns you are invited to contact me at 218-736-8590. Thank you!