



November 13, 2020

Message to Duncaster Residents and Families

Michael A. O'Brien, President and CEO

I wish I had more encouraging news to share. As you have probably heard, we are in a critical period in the battle against the COVID-19 virus. Yesterday, the Governor reported that the surge of COVID-19 cases has reached red-alert status in 100 of Connecticut's 169 cities and towns, including the town of Bloomfield. The 14-day positivity rate for Bloomfield is now up to 17.8.

So what does red-alert mean for all of us? Red-alert communities are defined as places where the measure of 15 cases per 100,000 people is exceeded. The Department of Public Health recommends that people who are high-risk living in red-alert communities stay home and limit trips outside the homes and avoid gatherings with non-family members. In addition, towns are encouraged to cancel public events and organized groups should postpone indoor activities and outdoor events where social distancing can't be followed and masks cannot be worn.

Dr. Scott Gottlieb, the former head of the Food and Drug Administration and medical advisor to the Governor, warned that all epidemiological models indicate cases will continue to increase into the new year and we're in for a very difficult two to three months.

### *Visitation Guidelines*

#### **Independent Living and Assisted Living**

As I noted last week, if Bloomfield's positivity rate goes above 14 per 100,000 population, or if we have an outbreak (defined as one positive case in staff or residents), we will halt indoor visitation and reevaluate. Therefore, based upon the current positivity rates and concerns from residents and staff, we have made the decision to **suspend indoor visitation effectively immediately**. Recognizing that visits are important we will continually reevaluate our visitor guidelines based upon community metrics. Visits for compassionate care, safety or health will continue.

#### **Caleb Hitchcock Health Center**

At Caleb Hitchcock Health Center (CHHC), we have been providing indoor compassionate care visitation for any resident that has had a significant change in condition or is deemed as being at end of life.

One of our clinical staff members tested positive (considered an outbreak) for COVID-19 and therefore indoor visits (except compassionate care) at CHHC remain on hold for 2 weeks because of the outbreak. Tents will remain for outdoor visits. As soon as CHHC is off the outbreak mode and we have a 14-day period with no positive staff and resident COVID-19 test results we will provide indoor visits.

### *Testing Update*

#### **Weekly Testing**

All staff and essential contractors continue to be tested weekly until further notice.

## **Caleb Hitchcock Health Center**

All staff were tested this week and one staff member tested positive. This individual is quarantining at home. Contact tracing and case investigation were initiated and all other staff were found to be at low risk due to double masking. All other staff tested negative. Testing of residents and staff at CHHC continues on a weekly basis.

## **Assisted Living-Dogwood**

All staff were tested this week and one staff member tested positive. This individual is quarantining at home. Contact tracing was conducted and those who have come in contact have been made aware and will take needed precautions. All other staff tested negative.

## **Main Building-All Staff, Independent Living Residents and Assisted Living Residents (Talcott Notch /Thistle Way)**

All staff were tested this week and we are waiting on results. Staff and Assisted Living residents will continue to be tested weekly. All Independent Living Residents will be tested December 2<sup>nd</sup>.

## ***Travel Advisory***

The State of Connecticut's travel advisory, which directs incoming travelers from states "hot locations" with a significant community spread of COVID-19 to self-quarantine for a 14-day period, was updated on November 10<sup>th</sup> and now includes the states of Maine and New Hampshire on the list of impacted locations. No locations were removed from the list this week. The list is updated once per week every Tuesday. The locations that are not on the "hot" list as of November 3<sup>rd</sup> are:

**Hawaii, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, Vermont and USVI.**

## ***CDC Confirms Masks Also Protect the Wearer***

On Tuesday the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention updated its guidance on masks, confirming that they not only protect those around the wearer from respiratory droplets, but "also help reduce inhalation of these droplets by the wearer." It confirms the long supported theory that masks offer more than one benefit and reduce the spread from asymptomatic or presymptomatic individuals.

On top of highlighting masks' importance, the organization also outlined what individuals should look for when choosing a mask. The goal should be finding one that offers both "source control" (protection for others) and protection for the wearer. Multilayer masks are key and surgical masks are a great option. The CDC notes that multilayer masks are effective in that they "block release of exhaled respiratory particles into the environment, along with the microorganisms these particles carry."

Cloth masks with more than one layer and a high thread count do provide protection. Although there has been a debate on whether or not cloth masks offer protection, the CDC endorsed the use of cloth masks in its briefing this week, saying that the face coverings "not only effectively block most large droplets but they can also block the exhalation of fine droplets and particles (also often referred to as aerosols) smaller than 10 microns."

The organization notes that multilayer cloth masks are particularly effective, blocking "50-70 percent of these fine droplets and particles and limiting the forward spread of those that are

not captured.” The CDC added that masks with higher thread counts offer more protection than those with low thread counts. Neck gaiters, unless doubled, do not offer much protection but are better than nothing. Bandanas are not recommended.

### ***Veterans Day***

On November 11<sup>th</sup> Duncaster recognized and celebrated 52 residents who served our country and helped to keep this Nation the “land of the free and the home of the brave.” Resident Mr. Arnold Amstutz remarked during the event that “It is our privilege to thank all these American veterans; To tell them how grateful we are for their service, and how much we admire their selfless sacrifice”.

### ***In Closing***

This week I was comforted to hear many staff and residents express their commitment to keep our community safe by making personal sacrifices. I am grateful. “I don’t want to be the reason the virus gets in here,” one resident firmly stated as he described a sacrifice he had made. “The danger is not individual, it’s collective.”

Dr Scholand, Infectious Disease Specialist, MidState Medical Center Emergency Department, shared a powerful statement this week. He said “you cannot trust this disease.” He is seeing greater numbers of cases than ever before in the Emergency Room and after contact tracing noticed that there was an outbreak from a doctor’s office. Be sure you are wearing your mask and use hand sanitizer when you go to needed medical appointments. Avoid touching your face or eyes until you can wash your hands.

We have pivoted again with our use of PPE for clinical staff and for those who work in the Dining Room. We continue to educate staff on staying safe at Duncaster and when at home. We are using the Governor’s Holiday Travel Advisory to help staff make safe decisions around the holidays. Staff with college students returning home are taking all needed precautions to stay safe.

I understand and empathize just how difficult a time this is for everyone and I ask for your continued patience and understanding. We will get through it together, but we must remain focused on what needs to be done now for the protection and wellbeing of you and those around you.

Be safe, be well.