

Jacqueline Sander

From: The Birches Assisted Living <jsander@birches.net>
Sent: Thursday, March 19, 2020 2:07 PM
To: Jacqueline Sander
Subject: The Birches: Latest Updates on COVID-19 Response



March 19, 2020

Residents and Family Members:

Here is the latest I can share with you.

At this time, there are **no cases** here at The Birches but we are continuing to enhance and tighten our operations to prepare for what may come.

I heard there were some confirmed cases at some local Assisted Living homes, and the good news for now, is that we **do not** currently have any team members working at those locations. At this time, we have compiled a list of where all of our team members have second jobs in healthcare (hospitals, agencies, nursing homes, and other communities) so we can monitor closer.

I know each of you is following what is going on at Chateau in Willowbrook. We are too. Thankfully none of our team members work there either, however, our concern is that other local nursing homes are not receiving as much support (with the growing amount of cases) as this Willowbrook property (meaning testing all residents and team members that may have been exposed), and a lot of healthcare workers work for multiple communities.

With the **shortage of tests**, many local communities are still waiting to 1) receive a test for someone they suspect (sometimes taking

longer than a week) and 2) getting denied access to test all their team/residents when they do have a confirmed case in house (see Three Crown's Park in Evanston news). The quickest way to confirm if someone is positive is by sending them to the hospital after ruling out all other conditions, but it is highly discouraged if symptoms are mild. These drive up clinics can help, but I don't know how it would look for us to send residents there. More on this topic as we hear more.

As I've mentioned before, and **should we have any suspicions in the future**, if someone doesn't feel well or should they have a fever, we are keeping them in their apartment and monitoring symptoms. Doctors will not send them to the hospital unless the symptoms are severe, unstable, or not manageable by our team. This is the same throughout flu season too. We are as prepared as we can be to isolate in house.

Starting tomorrow, **we are going to start serving all meals in resident apartments**. Some of our oldest team members work in dietary, and to protect both them and your loved one, we need to create a comfortable space for them to fulfill their duties and serve about 6' or more from our residents. We are trying to reduce fear and make everyone comfortable here. Residents are still able to come out of their apartments, but we have to adjust the serving experience for our servers.

A few days ago we implemented that **all deliveries have to be dropped off in our vestibule** (except related to medications) so no traffic goes through our doors. We are holding all deliveries in the office for a minimum 24 hours because these droplet spores can stay on cardboard up to 24 hours (72 hours on metal). If you have something that has to be delivered right away, just call our front desk.

Starting next week we hope to have **slotted times for FaceTiming** your loved ones throughout the week. We have tested this out with a few families and it is going really well!

Some families have asked if they can **take their loved one home** during this time. Our answer is yes, but they **cannot return** until the visitor restriction is lifted due to the safety of all residents and team members here. We are already sad that this is in place and this has to be done. We know it is hard to keep each of you away but because you have entrusted us with your loved ones care, we have to be overprotective for all parties involved. **Each of us have to act as if**

we are a current carrier and distance ourselves accordingly to minimize the spread.

Some families have asked **why we are still doing activities** with 10 or fewer people vs canceling. Our answer is that 1) with our current activities, we can confirm how many times your loved one is washing their hands throughout the day and 2) your loved ones have made it clear to me that they "will still mingle" even without a planned day. There is risk in choice for all parties involved during this time. However, we have cut some activities short so our team can support the dining room and housekeeping department.

Our team is **acting as if "they are a carrier"** and modifying their interactions and day to day routines accordingly. This is **how all of us need to act** to get through this storm.

With how rapidly this is growing in our local area, it will be inevitable that it may come through our doors, but as I have told many of you, if an older adult were to get sick... I'd prefer them to be here with us with our team. All we can do is try to minimize the spread as much as we can in the meantime.

We are all here to work together to keep our community healthy and safe.

More to come as it happens,

Jacqueline Sander
Executive Director

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