

August 20, 2021

Families, friends, residents and staff;

We continued testing staff twice a week this week, all results returned as negative for both rounds of testing. The county remains in a substantial level of transmission with a positive PCR testing rate of over 5% which means testing will be on-going for the next couple weeks.

By now most people have been made aware of President Biden's announcement that HHS will develop new regulations mandating nursing homes to require all of their workers be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 as a condition of participating in the Medicare and Medicaid programs. St. Vincent's is a recipient of the Medicare and Medicaid programs and will be required to follow the new ruling. The American Health Care Association (AHCA) is a non-profit federation of affiliated state health organizations that represents more than 14,000 non-profit and for-profit nursing homes, assisted living communities, and facilities for individuals with disabilities. AHCA has pointed out the inequity of singling out nursing homes when other health care providers who participate in the Medicare and Medicaid programs are left out. In the weekly COVID-19 Community Workgroup other health organizations stated they are also looking at vaccinations for all staff, if passed this collective effort is a unifying signal that the communities health affiliates are committed to its members and patients. As an organization we are discussing the best way to navigate this mandate and will provide a detailed update with next week's letter.

Throughout the week we have noticed an increase in visitors waiting at the nurse's station to speak with staff, going to see another resident whom was not part of the scheduled visit and not going directly to the intended visitation location. As a collective we have done remarkable complying with CMS visitation requirements and we request everyone strictly follow them so we can continue to allow the current volume of daily visits. It is important to not visit a resident if they were not part of the scheduled visit and to avoid the nurse's station. If you would like to speak with staff please ring the call bell and/or wait in the door threshold and obtain staff attention.

Please remember, we are obligated to obey the following CDC/CMS requirements:

- Scheduling visits with COVID screening
- Screening prior to entry is mandatory
- Masks worn properly at all times
 - Masks may be removed when all individuals are fully vaccinated and while around people not in your party
- Visitors must socially distance from staff and residents who they have not scheduled a visit with
- Please avoid changing visit time unless it is necessary
- You do not have to call if you would like to change the visit location (outdoors to indoors)

Please do not hesitate to call or email with questions, concerns or comments.

Thank you,

Jeffrey Lacroix

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