



Coronavirus Update

Terri Cunliffe / April 3, 2020

Introduction

The very nature of the news and information about the Coronavirus is changing rapidly ... and as an organization, we are working hard to stay on top of those changes. Our COVID-19 task forces at the Central Office and your communities continue to meet several times daily to review and modify our precautionary measures and practices to manage the impact of the virus at our communities.

We remain in close contact with local, state and Federal health authorities. We continue to follow their guidance, as well as that of the Centers for Disease Control. As information changes, we are adapting. One such adaptation is to extend the Community Visitation Policy and “physical distancing” guidelines through at least April 30. This follows what several states and the Federal government announced earlier this week.

Physical Distancing

Now you might have noticed the shift in my wording to “physical distancing.” As you know from my previous videos, I am burdened by the impact of this virus on your overall well-being. The phrase “physical distancing” may be more positive than the phrase “social distancing,” but the meaning is the same. It is critically important for you to practice physically distancing while staying socially connected. This means we do not gather in groups larger than 10 and we always keep a six-foot distance from other individuals.

While you will continue to see references to “social distancing” in the news, at Covenant Living we want to recognize the importance of staying socially connected -- using your phone, FaceTime or in whatever way you can – and we will refer to it as “physical distancing.” Are you with me on that?

Face Masks

We have heard many questions about the use of face masks. At this point, some States and local health departments are requiring healthcare employees to wear face masks in Skilled Nursing. Medical masks, along with other protective equipment, are worn when nursing and housekeeping staff are caring for or cleaning the room of individuals with a confirmed or

suspected COVID-19 case. In situations where residents are not in isolation, non-medical masks, such as homemade masks or bandanas should be used.

The use of non-medical masks is more about preventing the spread of germs to someone else, than it is about preventing the spread of germs from someone else. The World Health Organization recommends that people not wear face masks unless they are sick with COVID-19 or caring for someone who is.

What you hear about on the news is the shortage of medical masks at hospitals and other healthcare providers. Covenant Living has an adequate supply of medical masks for our current use at all communities and we continue to acquire masks and other personal protective equipment from as many credible sources as possible.

Hand-Washing

The most effective way to help prevent the spread of this virus is through physical distancing and frequent hand washing with plain old soap and water. If you are anything like me, my hands are dry and chapped from so much handwashing and hand sanitizer! Singing “Happy Birthday” twice while washing hands is an effective length of time, but for the past month I’ve been singing “The Doxology” in a prayerful way, over the sink.

It has been a great reminder for me to praise God, even in this season -- for his goodness, his love and his grace. Just this week, I changed my handwashing song to “Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus”. This chorus has always been my “go-to song” during times of personal uncertainty because I find the words to be comforting and a reminder that I am not alone.

Coronavirus on Campus

In my earlier videos, I mentioned that despite all of the preventive measures we put in place, we should expect to experience the coronavirus in our communities. We have and we are now experiencing positive cases.

Thus far, four of our communities have been impacted. There has been no more than two cases at any community, except in one circumstance, and that is confined to healthcare. If you haven’t been notified of a confirmed COVID-19 case in your community, then your community has not had any confirmed case. In nearly all cases, those individuals are recovering.

At the time of a confirmed case, residents, employees and family members at the impacted community are notified in writing by the Executive Director. As new cases arise, your Executive

Director will continue to keep you up-to-date. Our primary focus at each campus is to care for our residents and staff. If you are not feeling well, then please stay home and contact your community nurse and physician as soon as possible.

As you know, the staff are working extremely hard to provide care and services to you. I have enjoyed the stories and pictures how residents and staff are working together to create joy and peace of mind as we serve residents in a new and different way. I am impressed with the energy and smiles despite the situation we are facing.

Caring for Employees

Early on, knowing the coronavirus would present significant challenges for our staff, we instituted two additional benefits for hourly staff. First, additional paid time off, over and above their existing benefit, to help staff members who may be required to self-isolate or quarantine for a specified period of time due to exposure to the virus at work.

Secondly, we added a \$200 Appreciation Bonus for hourly employees who successfully complete their scheduled shifts. The Appreciation Bonus is paid out at the end of each pay period. At this time, we expect these benefits to continue into June.

We appreciate their commitment to you and our common purpose to create joy and peace of mind, especially in this time of many unknowns! These are just a couple of ways we can say thank you to our dedicated and caring staff!

Caring for Residents

By now, you may be seeing additional programming through your in-house television station. Our extremely creative community staff are continuing to identify as many programs as possible to help fill your days.

Each community has been sharing videos and photos of the unique and creative things happening — from mid-afternoon snacks delivered by employees in costumes, to residents sewing masks for donations, to a 4 pm “wave” with residents standing on their balconies as the employees walk through the community streets and sing. All of these creative activities are done with you in mind. And we hear our employees love doing this.

We are actively recruiting temporary staff to provide additional support to cover for staff out sick and provide adequate support for residents.

And we remind you to continue to be aware of cybercriminals who take advantage of the Coronavirus situation. We hear about more activity in this area every day.

Conclusion

This past week I have been drawn to 2nd Corinthians 1:3, where the apostle Paul writes about the God of all comfort.

“Praise be to God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.”

God is the comforter over fear, anxiousness, worry, loneliness, sorrow and suffering. He is the giver of endurance and encouragement!

During this time of physical distancing and social isolation, I encourage you to find new ways to provide comfort to those in need -- through phone calls, written notes or FaceTime with a friend down the hall.

May God bless each and every one of you in our Covenant Living family. This virus presents what can seem like daunting challenges. But Covenant Living will emerge a bit wiser, more connected and stronger in faith.

Let us continue to choose:
Faith over fear,
Prayer over panic,
Worship over worry,
And service over selfishness.

God bless you and thank you for your time.