



## **Covenant Living Special Update**

### **Terri Cunliffe / May 1, 2020**

Hello, I'm Terri Cunliffe, president and CEO of Covenant Living.

Across the country, the Coronavirus has made a significant impact on all of our lives. We had no idea, at the beginning of March, the extent to which the virus would change the way we do business ... the way we interact with each other and our families ... and the way we participate in activities, or go to church.

Today's headlines are dominated by the debate about how we re-open the country, about how we get back to the way things used to be. But in reality, we have a long road in front of us. Last week, I mentioned the CDC report outlining the three phases for re-opening America. The report details the slow and methodical steps for re-opening businesses and public spaces. If you missed the video last week, you can find it on the Coronavirus Advisory page of the Covenant Living website.

### **Approach to re-opening**

As we refine the plan for re-opening our communities, we know one thing for certain: the health and safety of our residents and employees is our top priority. It is critical as the virus remains active in and around our communities, that we not increase the opportunity for new cases by re-opening too quickly.

We expect every state, city or county, to have its own timeline for re-opening and its own method for prioritizing services. As a result, the timing and process for re-opening will be different for each one of our communities.

But they will all have one thing in common, implementation takes time.

Re-opening a community is not as easy as flipping an "on" switch. It will be more like turning a dial ... slowly. The process will take weeks, if not months, to fully understand what the new normal will be.

As we prepare for re-opening, the Central Office team is drafting new procedures for services, including physical distancing markers, the use of personal protective equipment, health screening requirements ... even for residents ... before accessing certain services, like salons, and expanding "no touch" transactions. Nearly every service will be provided in a new way. Prior to a service re-opening at your community, staff will be trained and drilled in the new procedures in order to assure they understand and practice the new requirements. When we

are confident that the appropriate safety measures are in place, then we will reinstate the service.

These measures are critical to minimizing the risk of the virus spreading in our communities. So, be prepared. None of these services will be available until after “shelter-in-place” orders have been lifted and a service has been authorized to re-open by local governments. And, there will be a delay between the official re-opening date for your state or county, and the date that a service will once again be available at your community.

While many of us are looking forward to when individual services will be available again, the three-phased approach to re-opening focuses more on when and how our communities interact with the outside world. According to the CDC guidelines, vulnerable adults are encouraged to continue to shelter in place until the Third Phase. This means that even as services re-open, you must continue to minimize your off-site activities, and always use a mask when you do.

Throughout the re-opening process, it is important to practice “personal responsibility.” Maintain your physical distancing of at least six feet. Wash your hands, frequently and thoroughly, with warm water and soap. Avoid touching your face. Don’t gather in groups larger than ten. Clean your assistive device regularly. And stay home if you are coughing, sneezing or not feeling well. In many cities, masks are required for everyone in public areas. And I am sure that masks will be required for residents and staff in all levels of living throughout our re-opening process, except of course when eating.

If we experience an increase in COVID-19 cases at any point in the re-opening process, we will be required to go back on “lock down.” And as much as I want this process to be smooth and uneventful, we should all expect intermittent “lock downs” to be part of our life throughout 2020.

### **No plans for testing**

Some of you have asked if all residents and employees will be tested for COVID-19 before we re-open services. At this point, we are not planning to test all residents and employees prior to re-opening for the following reasons:

There are a limited number of test kits available, depending on your market area. When enough test kits are available, residents and staff will have the opportunity to seek out testing. Test results are only valid for a moment in time, meaning daily testing would be required to validate a community as “virus free.” That would require access to a significant number of test kits, which is just not feasible at this time.

Our employees already undergo a health and temperature screening at the beginning of every shift.

You should know, we continue to closely follow guidance from state and county health departments, as well as the CDC. As we re-open services, the use of masks in public areas, physical distancing and personal hygiene will be critical.

### **Programming for residents**

Just a couple of weeks ago, you will recall that our Dining Services pulled out all of the stops to make your Easter special. Well, heads up! I have it on good authority that your Dining teams are collaborating with your Resident Life Directors to make Mother's Day a very special day for everyone. So, while it may not be your typical Mother's Day, it should be meaningful for all of you.

Hopefully you've appreciated the virtual programming provided through your in-house television channels. Perhaps you've been watching the special performances, fitness classes, worship services, trivia and more. And hopefully you've seen the new "Our Life Today" program from the Covenant Living communications team. It provides stories from our communities around the country.

### **Community update**

Last week, I mentioned that eight of our communities have reported positive COVID-19 cases. As you've probably noticed, this virus seems to weave its way through states and communities in unpredictable patterns. This week, two more of our communities reported positive cases, bringing the total to 10 of our 17 communities. Consistent with my past updates, all communities have experienced a small number of positive cases, with the exception of Windsor Park. Most of the cases have been in Healthcare, with just a few in Residential Living. I believe this is a result of your commitment to the prevention control measures in place and the personal sacrifices you've made to help prevent the spread of the virus to others.

Please continue to pray for the residents, leadership and staff at all of our communities, but especially for those working and living at Windsor Park. This pandemic has required nearly every leader in our organization to work long hours, seven days a week, for several weeks. And I don't expect the re-opening to be any easier than the past two months.

Over the past few weeks, I've received cards and emails from residents and families expressing appreciation for the care and support community leaders and staff have provided through this pandemic experience. I appreciate hearing from you and your families. Early on, I expressed my

confidence that God has been preparing Covenant Living for this pandemic through the provision of capable and caring leaders. I am thankful for the leaders and staff at both the Central Office and our communities. Our leaders have led with courage and compassion, and our staff have served exhibiting loving care for residents, even behind masks, gloves and gowns. I am impressed and thankful for each and every one of them as they continue to lead and serve through the upcoming days of re-opening!

### **Closing thoughts**

As I close this update and I reflect on where we've been and the road ahead, I am encouraged by 1 Peter 5:10, "and the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast."

Peter concludes this letter with instructions for those in leadership roles. First, live in humility towards each other and God. Second, cast our cares on him. Third, remain clear-minded and firm in faith. And finally, after this brief life of suffering, our God will bring our suffering to an end and make us strong forever.

Thank you for your trust, encouragement and continued prayers for each other, your leaders and staff. God is blessing all of us with an extra measure of love, joy, energy, patience and strength through this situation. Blessings on you this upcoming week.

Thank you.