

Regretfully we will need to announce that we had 2 positive staff cases, one is a contracted employee, and one an in house employee. Both tests were run using our rapid testing machine. Both cases were sent for confirmatory viral PCR testing and we are awaiting results. Both employees are home on quarantine at this time. Due to the small chance of exposure, we tested all employees twice this week using the rapid test and all tests came back negative.

All residents who were potentially exposed to the staff person, or who consented were tested. Their results were negative. Testing will continue next week to meet DOH guidelines. The Regional Response Health Collaboration Program (RRHCP) team will be assisting with testing needs next week and sending PPE supplies as needed.

Consideration for upcoming holiday season and the heighten risk of exposure

We are aware of the upcoming holiday seasons and are planning for ways we can engage residents/ families while maintaining safety for all residents and staff. We know many of you want to be able to take residents out or to have more personal engagement during visits here in the facility. We too WANT you to be able to do so, but we have to define and plans WAYS THAT ARE POSSIBLE AND SAFE for your loved one and all other residents and staff as well. We will put forth guidance within the next month about holiday visiting.

This is a very unfortunate time to be immersed in the **rising number of cases in our region and the increased risk of exposure from persons who do not know that they carry the virus.** Our **residents are very vulnerable** and we MUST avoid an outbreak if we can by controlling any of the variable that could lead to an exposure to the virus that will result in an a virus outbreak for even one resident. The Altoona Mirror (10/23) today, gave some numbers of cases at two of the local facilities, including siting that there were 9 deaths among one facility's resident population. Having even one case is cause for alarm and radical action to limit and prevent spread, if possible. Putting a resident into quarantine after an outing or exposure does not guarantee that an outbreak will not result, nor is it a justification to open residents to unnecessary risk of exposure. Quarantine just gives us the heightened awareness to monitor that resident for symptoms, limit the exposure of that resident to others residents and the staff in general during a time person in which they may be contagious and not be showing symptoms. The quarantine process is very burdensome and costly as extra protective equipment and supplies must be used, staff assignments have to be re-adjusted, service levels have to change and risk monitoring is increased. **It also isolates residents to their room, eliminates any participation in small group activities, dining in the dining room, attendance at Mass, eliminates in person or window visits with families.** The more residents we have on quarantine, the more difficult it is for us to engage residents within the confines of their rooms with all services.

We quarantine any staff from entering the facility if they have a known or suspected exposure or if they have any potential symptoms. We do not risk staff coming to work if they potentially can have the virus until we are as assured as possible that they are clear.

We appreciate your concern for your loved one, and we hope you understand, trust and support any of the action we take to protect them.

Please also note that those residents in quarantine do still have the opportunity to participate in scheduled virtual visits and participate in activities via our closed circuit TV (channel 99)