

Family Update: 11/23/2021

Dear Sagepoint Families,

As you may have heard, the Center for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS) has lifted the restriction on the ban on visitors in nursing homes. While we are grateful for our residents to finally have the family members visit, transmission of COVID in our community is still high and we are approaching the holidays where an uptick in cases is expected. It is urgent that both family members and our staff work together to keep them safe and protect them from this still very deadly virus.

While Assisted Living are not bound by CMS regulations, the Assisted Living facilities operated by Sagepoint will follow the practices listed here.

Attached is factual information around what we know to be the best practice infection control principals to date and why we must still diligently follow them. These facts are what has informed our implementation of the new CMS visitation protocol which is also outlined here. It is important to be clear, we want to follow the guidelines for making visits to your loved one as close to “normal” as possible however we will still be requiring the best infection control practices for all visitors, staff and residents. It is all of our jobs to protect them.

Core Infection Prevention Principles and New Visitation Policies:

- Visitors with positive COVID test are not to enter the facility or visit outside. Visitors with COVID like symptoms are not enter and/or visit outside. COVID like symptoms currently include the following:
 - Fever
 - Cough
 - Sore throat
 - Muscle aches
 - Nausea/vomiting
 - Loss of taste and/or smell
 - Diarrhea
 - Abdominal pain
 - Headaches
 - Runny nose
 - Fatigue
- It is required the facilities “should’ screen all visitors as they enter the facility. Sagepoint has screened all those who have entered the facility as required since the spring of 2020. What we can share with you from our experience is temperature screening is **highly ineffective** method of identifying asymptomatic, pre-symptomatic and often even symptomatic COVID positive individuals. We have seen firsthand that very often patients’ with COVID will NOT develop a

temperature, at all. This is why it is imperative that visitors entering the facilities that care for the disabled and aged adhere to proper mask type protocols and proper mask wearing procedures.

- Proper mask type for entry into Sagepoint:
 - We have surgical masks available for visitors at the front door. We are comfortable with folks entering as allowed without medical PPE. However, we do reserve the right to ask you to wear a quality mask upon entering the building. This means a mask that is at least two layers thick. We will not support indoor visits for individuals that insist on wearing poor quality ultra-thin masks in the facility or unacceptable substitutions. We reserve the right to ask you to substitute for a surgical mask should we think it is necessary.
- Proper mask wearing:
 - A mask must be worn at ALL times while visiting. You may not remove your mask at any time during your visit. You may not eat with a patient, drink with a patient, as this requires the removal of your mask. All patients are to wear their mask appropriately while visiting in the facility. **Appropriate masking requires full coverage of both mouth and nose.** Please know the state regulators are very strict about how the masks are worn and failure to execute can result in citations and fines to the facility and more importantly, risk to your loved ones and others.
- **CMS requires that all visitors stay 6 feet away from the resident you are visiting and any other resident.**
- Hand hygiene soap and water or alcohol-based rub (hand sanitizer) is still required as is the wiping of surfaces is still required. Although in the early spring of 2020 the CDC has clearly indicated that contact transmission and touching surfaces is a highly unlikely means of transmitting COVID (early reports indicate less than 1 in 10,000). These actions while always necessary for general cleanliness are not an effective means of combatting COVID transmission and like temperature checking, more about required actions not based on the science we now know. Nevertheless, the rules remain within CMS guidance so we ask you to be conscientious about hand hygiene when you enter the building and are in the facility.
- Since August 2021, Sagepoint has and continues to maintain 100% staff compliance with COVID vaccines. We do not by contrast have 100% compliance for residents. In addition, we are all aware there are numerous cases of breakthrough infections in the community. While vaccinations are having their intended effect of keeping COVID related hospitalizations and deaths, it is more likely to create asymptomatic carriers. Sagepoint required testing in April of 2020 which has resulted in our ability to rapidly contain and continue to prevent the spread of the virus. We have continued to aggressively test because we believe it is the most important tool to protect staff and residents. This aggressive testing has not come without a price of nearly \$1,000,000 to date. Sagepoint will remain diligent about testing and we encourage families to purchase rapid point of care test and to test before visiting. While we know rapid point of care

test can still miss early COVID positive patients- it is simply another tool available for families that wish to remain as cautious as we have and protect each other and our loved ones.

Special Notes:

- Per CMS QSO-20-39-NH directives/transmittal - Visitors who cannot adhere to the above noted core principles for COVID infection control will be expected to exit the facility immediately.
- Outdoor visits are still preferred as long as possible into the season for all visits. This is a known and proven action that is far safer than indoor visits.
- **For patients and visitors that are not fully vaccinated outdoor visitation is still preferred and recommended.**
- We are not allowed to require a visitor produce vaccination documents- so our control on this matter is relatively limited to the patients whose medical records we have accessible.

What in this new CMS directive will change for my visits to my loved one?

- The federal government is not limiting length, frequency of visitation or number of visitors.
- Visiting hours will be 10:00 - 6:30pm daily. While CMS does not require scheduling for visits, please remember that daily activities such as meal time, dressing, bathing, medicine rounds may require a delay in your loved one to be prepared for the visit which could result in significant wait time for you. **We strongly suggest that you continue to schedule your visit** as you have been through Esmerelda Cline (Skilled Nursing) and Yolanda Medley (Assisted Living and Memory Care) to prevent unavoidable delays.
- The limitation of the above: The facility cannot allow large gatherings and visitors must maintain 6 feet of separation. Visitors are not allowed to move around the facility freely. Visitors still cannot automatically visit in resident's rooms.
- CMS does encourage all visitors to test before visiting 2-3 days prior, especially when the county is in substantial or high levels of community transmission. You can locate the daily transmission rates for the county and state at <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view>
- Important note: CMS openly acknowledges that visitation in the facility **does** create inherent risk of the transmission of COVID.

We are imploring visitors to please be conscientious extremely careful. It is not just you and your loved one sharing space and indoor air. All other residents and staff and visitors must share the same air. This means we are all in this together and we all put each other and our families at risk with each entry and exit into all the facilities at Sagepoint. It has been our daily mission to keep our residents who are at highest risk from COVID and we have done that. As we navigate these changes in the visitation requirements, we will continue to require the same high standards of our visitors.

Summary:

- Visiting hours are from 10am – 6:30pm, every day at a designated area.
- Visitors will be required to screen in at the check in tent located at the Red Room side door.
- We will have a Visitation Assistant daily 11am – 7pm.
- Rehab Unit visitors must enter through the side door check in area, (or Front Desk area if outside of visitation hours) and shown to the Rehab Unit for in room visits.
- Visitors of residents who require transmission-based precautions (enhanced infection control procedures) for a variety of reasons will be given a visitor PPE kit to don prior to entering a specific visitation room.
- Visits are no longer required to be scheduled, but the families are strongly encouraged to give advanced notice of their visit to assist the staff with making the resident available. Schedule through ecline@sagepointcare.org (Skilled nursing) or yedley@sagepointcare.org (assisted living/memory care)
- Visitors may NOT EAT OR DRINK OR REMOVE THEIR MASKS at any time during the visit. Masks must be worn properly (covering mouth and nose) throughout the entire visit.
- Residents must WEAR THEIR MASKS during the visit AND MAY NOT EAT OR DRINK during the visit.