



Symphony Senior Living
In concert with your life

April 19, 2020

Hello Residents, Families and Team Members,

As of today, we remain COVID free in our buildings. Thanks to YOU – our residents, families and team members!!! We know that the most vulnerable population are seniors, so keeping things clean and contact limited for a bit longer, will help to ensure we do not have a severe outbreak. In the event that we do have an outbreak in the future, we are planning around various scenarios, to ensure that it is as limited as possible and well controlled.

Many long-term care facilities, retirement homes and almost all hospitals are now dealing with active Covid cases and outbreaks. Our Regional Director of Care and Compliance compiles a list everyday of three health units that surround our properties and we have been watching this carefully for the past two months. We also are tracking DAILY staff illness, resident's illness, isolations, and hospital visits at each property; we have been doing this since early March. Largely we are a healthy group!

Masks:

Yesterday our large orders of surgical masks finally landed in Toronto and we have issued our stock to the homes to beginning using these masks as recently required by the Ministry of Health. We will hold onto enough stock for an outbreak and should we run out of the daily allotment before our next supply delivery we may have to return to fabric masks for non-direct care staff; that's said we think we should have enough.

Gowns, eye protection and other PPE:

These items are needed IF we go into outbreak with Covid or another infection. We have a very limited supply of gowns right now, we have 2000 on route, but another large order of 2000 gowns has been caught in politics in China and has not yet shipped. Gowns appear to be in serious short supply around the world. We will continue to work our many chains of supply to secure more. We have received 50 sets of reusable googles from a local hardware store. We chose not to use disposable face shields as they are extremely hard to get and to get in any quality, not to mention the horrible environmental impact. We can safely sanitize googles and reuse.

Staff members dedicated to one workplace:

Recently the Ministry of Health directed all Hospitals, Long Term Care Homes and Retirement Homes to have staff only work at one location. This is to be formally implemented starting April 22, 2020. Luckily, we had foreseen this being an issue early on and in March we made plans to move to dedicated staff and CCAC workers. This was fully implemented a couple weeks back.

We have not had any major issues in staffing at the homes with this move. Although one of our homes, Forest Valley Terrace, is a bit short staffed on PSWs and Housekeepers. Our remaining staff



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have really stepped up to fill in shifts and managers and regional staff are picking up shifts for direct care and other services to ensure the safety of our residents.

We are actively recruiting for Forest Valley Terrace; but given the limited number of health care workers available due to the new requirement about working at one location, we have switched to looking for compassionate and smart individuals that our managers and nurses can train. This is also proving to be challenging as the government funding to “remain at home” is resulting in many not “needing to work”. If you know of any housekeepers, cleaners, dining room servers, cooks or activity aides that have a passion for working with seniors, a caring heart and courage, please send them our way to Susan Jolin our regional business manager who is heading up the recruiting efforts : sjolin@symphonyseniorliving.com.

We offer competitive wages and great benefits. We have full and part time positions available and will train. During this difficult time, we are offering a Covid Hero Bonus, Sign on Bonus and an awesome Symphony 2020 Pandemic Hero t-shirt! We are also, working on providing transportation for employees, to improve access to major public transit stations.

Testing:

I know everyone is hearing from the politicians about “Testing for all health care workers and all residents”. That is not exactly a correct statement. There are defined parameters to get a COVID test and we are following those MOH guidelines. Basically, someone with symptoms, either staff or residents will be tested and prioritized. They are turning those results around faster. We send a letter with staff to assist them to get a faster result.

If we go into outbreak with an active Covid positive case in house, then yes, they will test all staff and residents, from what we understand. We have submitted an order to Toronto for 400 swabs to prepare for that possibility. More information can be found on the Ottawa Health Unit site on testing guidelines.

Hospital Admissions and Readmissions:

There have been some recent changes in the Hospital transfer policy. The hospitals are not as overwhelmed as they thought they would be, which is a good thing. That said, due to the fast spread in many LTC homes, **the hospital has been directed to NOT transfer residents back to LTC or retirement homes after an ER visit or admission.**

In the recent past, we refused to accept any admissions from hospital without a negative covid test; there was intense pressure for us to accept new respites and new residents in March from the hospital, but we remained firm on our decision. Initially the MOH/RHRA our regulatory body, directed that we could NOT REFUSE a readmission – we were extremely careful and always asked for a COVID test – now they are saying they are going to stop transfers/readmissions from hospital to a care home.



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This is good news on one front, they are being more careful with the possible spread of Covid into vulnerable populations; but it can have implications for you and your loved one. If you are sent to hospital, we will not control the readmission or transfer process. We think hospitals will work logically and if a resident is Covid negative and the risk is low, they will discharge back to the home; but at this point they have been “directed to not transfer any patients “ under their care and we may not have a say in the process.

Our guidance in the last update and outlined again here, is of even more importance now with this new change in regulations.

Questions I would be asking the doctor and/or our wellness coordinator/ED prior to authorizing a send to hospital of my loved one:

- 1) What will be done in hospital given the situation that cannot be done in house?
- 2) What is the likelihood that an effective treatment is available in hospital, given your current health and condition?
- 3) Will quality of end of life (if that’s the case) be improved or reduced if a transfer to hospital?
- 4) Can whatever is being suggested, be done in house with Doctor guidance?
- 5) Have we done all we can remotely, before a transfer to hospital?

To prepare for a possible unexpected hospital transfer, we ask you consider you guidance and paperwork with us and talk to our Wellness Coordinator or Executive Director if concerned or want to modify or clarify any directive. We have increased our access and stock of Oxygen and Palliative kits., should we need to have quick access to comfort measures for any resident.

Our teams remain dedicated and are working very hard on multiple fronts. This has been a stressful time for all of us. We hope that over the next few weeks the curve will not only flatten, as new cases have started to slow down, even though more LTCs and Outbreaks are being reported in vulnerable populations. We are already starting to discuss what a “new normal” might look like. My guess is it will first include family, close friends and then expand from there. In some ways, we have enjoyed the changes this challenge brought; our staff have shown us great talents we didn’t know about and the team is able to share more of their lives and the things they enjoy with the family of residents. Hang in there! We are in this together!!

Sincerely,

Lisa Brush
CEO and Founder
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