



**July 6, 2020**

Dear Family Member/Responsible Party:

We want to thank you again for your patience and understanding as we continue to navigate the complexities of the COVID-19 pandemic. As many of you are now aware, Governor Whitmer recently issued an Executive Order (EO), with guidance from the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, regarding visitation in skilled nursing facilities. However, the EO restricts family visitation to only a few specific circumstances, meaning many family and friends of our residents will remain unable to enter our facilities.

We are aware of the challenges the COVID-19 pandemic has placed on our residents, their family members and our employees, but we stand by our commitment to move forward in the safest way we can for everyone involved. Accordingly, we must continue to comply with guidance and restrictions placed by the State, local health departments, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).

We have included excerpts from the Governor's press release (*in italics*) here for your reference:

***NURSING HOME VISITATION:***

*Facilities may permit in-person visitation only in the following circumstances:*

*A. The visit supports activities of daily living ("ADLs") or are necessary to ensure effective communication with individuals with hearing, vision or speech impairments and are limited to arrangements that:*

- I. Existed prior to March 14, 2020, or become necessary in light of a change in the resident's condition, such as refusing to eat, that could be improved with assistance from a resident support person; and*
- II. Involve a family member or friend assisting a resident with activities of daily living, such as feeding the resident to encourage and ensure adequate nutrition; and*
- III. Require the visitor to wear a mask at all times and use appropriate procedures for the assigned ADL tasks, with the facility ensuring compliance through training or observation; and*
- IV. Are scheduled in advance for specific and individualized ADL tasks; and Occur in the resident's room, if private, or in a room designated by the facility; and*

*B. When a resident is in "serious or critical condition or in hospice care" consistent with Executive Order 2020-136.*

**What's Next?**

We are currently evaluating family involvement in ADL care prior to COVID-19 in March of 2020 and are working on our preparations to provide a safe visitation process as we assess the Governor's

considerations noted above. We expect to provide an update of our facility's visitation plans on or around July 10th. We plan to post updates on the facility website in addition to communicating via e-mail/US mail. While we all have learned the flexibility and patience that is required during the COVID-19 pandemic, we must also realistically acknowledge that everything is still subject to change. There are concerns with data spikes in cases around Michigan that could cause the Governor to recant the permission to move forward with visitation. A facility's status could realistically change from one day to the next, causing a delay in visitation. Please understand as we take these steps forward to provide the safest opening for visitation, it will still require patience, flexibility and working through it together.

### **How Can I Prepare for a Visit?**

Our utmost concern is for the health and safety of our residents and our employees. We understand that visitation could increase the likelihood of spread or transmission to our Laurel family and it is a real concern for us. When we begin visitation, there will be a process that must be followed, including a schedule of set hours, appointment times and limited number of visitors and visits (at least initially), all of which will be outlined in our communication on or around July 10th.

We strongly encourage that those planning to visit, once visitation is allowed, be tested for COVID-19. We have all heard of people who test positive that have not shown or experienced any symptoms (that's called "asymptomatic"); it is so important for your own peace of mind as well as ours that you know your COVID status before visiting. Additionally, being in the consistent habit of using a face mask or similar face covering and exercising constant hand washing and sanitizing will put you in good health before and during your visits. More information and tips will be shared later this month to help you prepare.

### **Virtual Visits**

As a reminder, we have many ways to keep connected and have really upped our game with technology. We still have devices available to provide Skype calls, Zoom calls, phone calls and texts. Our "ConnectTo" email is available for email deliveries, mail service is back up for mail and package delivery, and we are happy to set up window visits with your loved one (with windows closed). We remain committed to helping you visit virtually until you can visit socially distanced, but in person. Please contact any staff member to assist you with a virtual visit.

### **Gratitude**

Finally, we want to share our immense gratitude. We can only imagine how difficult this is for you to have been physically separated from your loved one. We want to assure you that we have strived to be your stand-in whenever needed, knowing we can never be a perfect substitute for the love and care you provide. We thank you for your commitment and support as we have journeyed through this together. We will continue to strive in exceeding your expectations.

Sincerely,

Your Laurels Administrative Staff