



Latest COVID-19 Update

Wednesday, April 7, 2021

As of April 6, we determined that a staff member received a positive COVID test result after experiencing symptoms and going to a local testing site. This was not part of the RCH weekly testing process, but we still need to advise our families of any positive test.

The employee does not have a clinical role and does not interact with residents. Per the new state visitation guidelines, so long as a case affects just one area in the building (which has been properly sanitized and the employee remains home for the required number of quarantine days), indoor visitation can continue. So there are no changes to announce in that regard.

On Monday, the NJ State Department of Health updated their guidance regarding traveling restrictions, which we thought you would want to know about. Of particular note:

People who are fully vaccinated with an FDA-authorized vaccine and persons who clinically recovered from COVID-19 in the past 3 months who are traveling domestically within the United States do not need to be tested for COVID-19 before or after travel to New Jersey and do not need to self-quarantine upon return. Fully vaccinated persons arriving in New Jersey from abroad are still recommended to be tested for COVID-19 3-5 days after return, but do not need to quarantine. Unvaccinated travelers and residents returning from any U.S. state or territory beyond the immediate region (New York, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, and Delaware) should self-quarantine at their home, hotel, or other temporary lodging following Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations for unvaccinated people.

The full document can be found at

<https://www.state.nj.us/health/cd/documents/topics/NCOV/TravelRestrictions.pdf>

Thursday, April 1, 2021 Update

Dear Residents, Families, and Staff:

After 2 rounds of testing this week (one PCR and one rapid test) all staff results are NEGATIVE! So we are happy to be entering the holiday weekend on such a high note!

On that topic, we opened our doors to indoor visitation on Monday this week and it has gone relatively well. With the long weekend ahead, we do wish to remind all of our visitors to observe all the necessary safety precautions to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 to residents and staff, as well as to keep yourself safe. This includes:

Visits are by appointment only and can be scheduled at:

For Assisted Living: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0D4FADAE2EABFEC52-assisted>

For Skilled Nursing: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0D4EA4AE28A1FCC61-indoor1>

- You must complete an informed consent form acknowledging the potential exposure to COVID when deciding to visit in the building.
- All visitors must remain masked at all times.
- In order to hug your vaccinated loved one, the visitor should have on a tight-fitting mask and leave the mask on.
- Please do not consume food with the resident. You can certainly bring in food for the resident such as Easter or Passover treats, but we ask that you leave the food at the front desk. We will deliver it to the room after your visit.
- Flowers or plants are allowed to be brought to the resident's room or common area.
- Please be sure to use hand sanitizer before and after your visit.
- Please remain at least 6 feet apart from staff or other families.
- Residents that have a semi-private room will be assigned a space in a common area so as not to expose the roommate to non-family members.
- We STRONGLY ENCOURAGE all visitors to arrive at least 20 minutes before your visit time so that you can complete the rapid test, which we are offering free and takes about 15 minutes for the results. This request is for the safety of everyone in the building.
- We also STRONGLY ENCOURAGE all visitors to have the annual flu shot and also the COVID vaccine as soon as possible/it is your turn.

Thursday, March 18, 2021 Update

Some days just prove how fickle the coronavirus can be. We conducted PCR testing this week and were dismayed to find that 2 staff members in the same department (with non-clinical roles) tested positive for COVID-19. One of the two staff affected had received the full vaccination regimen, which was particularly disappointing.

This revelation reminds us that the vaccine is not a magic bullet. An article published by Yale Medicine on February 27, 2021 indicates that the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine (the one administered to RCH staff and residents) is 95% effective 2 weeks following the second dose. That means that it will work in 95 out of 100 people in preventing disease or lessening the severity of disease. So there is a small amount of people (5%) that – for whatever reason – do not develop full immunity. The CDC is also investigating if/how people who test positive after being fully vaccinated can pass on the virus to others, even if they are asymptomatic. We do not know when that study will be completed.

At this point we are certain that a huge concern you have is...what about visitation? We are STILL waiting to receive guidance from the NJ Department of Health on that topic. We are hopeful that the state will concur with the CMS/CDC guidance that, if the outbreak is confined to one area, and if all staff and residents are tested and there are no other positive cases, we can proceed.

So as you can imagine, testing will continue this week, and we will reach out as soon as we have results, or if we hear from the state on visitation guidelines.

To paraphrase a quote found on Pinterest... ***“If we quit now, we’ll end up right back where we first began. And when we first began, we were desperate to be where we are RIGHT NOW. So there’s no other choice but to KEEP GOING!”***

Friday, March 12, 2021 Update

In follow up to our email of yesterday, we want you to know that we have not yet gotten any word from the State of NJ regarding their updated nursing home visitation guidance, now that CMS/CDC have come out with recommendations that residents should be able to have visitors with certain precautions followed. We are hopeful the Department of Health will do their job quickly and provide direction.

In the meantime, this week brought good testing news. We started using a new lab for staff PCR testing, which is able to turn around results in 24 hours. PCR testing was done at the beginning of the week – ALL NEGATIVE FOR ALL STAFF J. Rapid testing was completed yesterday and today for all staff, and once again, ALL NEGATIVE J. We will need to continue testing staff twice per week, since the COVID-19 Activity Level (CALI Score) in New Jersey is still “High,” which is likewise true in Middlesex County. Some parts of the State (mostly west and south) are considered “Moderate.”

Because we have not had any staff-positive tests for over 2 weeks, residents can now be tested every other week. They were not tested this week, but will be tested during the week of March 15.

Here’s a pleasant thought to end the week: ***“We may not be there yet, but we are closer than we were yesterday.”***

Thursday, March 11, 2021 Update

As many of you probably know, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), in collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), released updated guidance yesterday for nursing homes to safely expand visitation during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We totally support the relaxed guidelines to allow family visitation! In fact, we are thrilled that the federal government acknowledges the effects of isolation and depression resulting from the visitation restrictions placed upon us one year ago. However, CMS and CDC are federal government agencies. We are not immediately able to implement their new direction, because the federal recommendations must now be reviewed and implemented on a state level.

The next step is for the NJ Department of Health to review the guidance announced yesterday and provide its own direction on how to implement the changes in our state, taking into account the positivity rates by county and other data. Reformed Church Home must wait for and follow this direction as a licensed NJ senior community.

We know this news is a welcome relief and you are anxious to see your loved ones!! We are getting closer but please continue to be patient. In the next few days, we expect to receive direction from the NJ Department of Health and will let you know immediately when we can start allowing visitors, what process will be followed, etc.

Rest assured, we are working behind the scenes to make this happen as soon as we get the green light!

Friday, March 5, 2021

March certainly came “in like a lion” this week! But with the harsh weather came some good news. Rapid testing of staff early in the week resulted in no positive cases! PCR testing for staff took place on Thursday, and we are still awaiting these results, which should arrive by Monday. So at this time, there are no new COVID cases among residents nor staff.

Despite the cold weather we were blessed to have a very generous donation presented to our residents by Silver Linings of Old Bridge (the local senior center) in conjunction with a St. Joseph’s High School freshman, Kyle Giuliano. As a service project, Kyle collected items and monetary donations to put together care packages with toiletries and other gifts. He created the care packages for Old Bridge Meals on Wheels and senior clients of the Old Bridge Food Bank, but wanted to support a nursing home as well.

Silver Linings recommended Reformed Church Home, since we partner together to support each other throughout the year. We are so thankful for this special surprise, which brought such joy to all of our residents. (Kyle delivered over 110 care packages to us!)

We will provide more updates next week as needed.

Wednesday, February 24, 2021 Update

We continue to appreciate your patience as we navigate the changing regulations and new information emerging about COVID variants and what they mean to nursing home reopenings in NJ. With the vaccine availability have come many questions about our visitation policies, which I’d like to answer here based on what we currently know.

Please understand that we must adhere to the directives of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and the state and county Departments of Health. Since day-one of the pandemic, these organizations have dictated the requirements for nursing homes to follow (or be subject to steep fines, closure, or license revocation). They also will dictate when we can open back up to outdoor and/or indoor visitation. This decision will be based partially on the positivity rate in the surrounding community, which as you know has been particularly high in Middlesex County to date. Please note that CMS also regulates what is allowed in nursing homes related to COVID, to further guide the states. During a mid-February interview, Evan Shulman, CMS nursing home division director, stated, “It’s too early...[CMS] cannot change our visitation or other guidance now at this moment in time, but we are looking at it and want to change it as soon as possible.” One reason cited by Shulman is that health officials don’t yet know if the vaccine prevents transmission or how well it will hold up against new COVID-19 variants.

As soon as we receive updated guidance, we will share it with our families. We know how badly you wish to see your loved ones and we appreciate that fact more than you know. I assure you we are continually asking these same questions to health officials and have our residents’ best interests at the heart of all we do. That being said, we will keep finding creative ways to keep residents connected, distracted from COVID news, and engaged in fun activities to pass the time.

COVID Update – Please note that late yesterday and today we received more test results, which have been slowly catching up, and we have one more positive staff member to report. This person does not have direct resident contact but is considered an employee of the skilled nursing center (versus assisted living).

Tuesday, February 23, 2021 Update

We received results from testing completed last week (which were delayed due to the nationwide severe weather), and have determined two staff members are COVID-positive. Please note that the 2 staff members work in different departments, but considered part of the skilled nursing facility. As

always, we wanted to let you know as quickly as possible. These employees remain home to quarantine.

At present, all staff are tested twice per week. However, this may change as the positivity rate in the surrounding area declines. We expect to hear an update this Thursday from the department of health regarding the current COVID stats in Old Bridge and Middlesex County, and will advise if anything changes regarding testing requirements.

Friday, February 19, 2021 Update

This week began with Valentine's Day, progressed to Mardi Gras and our 3rd vaccination clinic, included distribution of ashes by Pastor Sam on Ash Wednesday, and began and ended with snow snow snow. It was a busy week indeed. Check out multiple posts on our [Facebook page](#) if you haven't yet seen the pictures.

COVID testing continues twice per week for all staff members, once per week for skilled nursing residents, and every other week for assisted living residents. The bad weather throughout the country affected test result reporting, and as of end of day Friday, we have yet to receive most PCR results. However, the good news is, we had no positive tests this week of those reported.

Thursday, February 12, 2021 Update

Please note that as of this morning, we received a positive COVID test in a skilled nursing resident, who currently does not have symptoms, thank goodness. We are investigating through contact tracing but thus far we have not discovered the source of this infection. We will keep you posted if anything changes.

As a reminder, our next vaccination clinic will be on Tuesday, February 16 for residents and staff. We are looking forward to celebrating Valentine's Day with the residents this weekend and making their day extra-special. A special dessert with personalized messages from family will be given out on Sunday, and Valentine grams were delivered today complete with the resident's favorite candy, a small stuffed gift, and a card.

Wednesday, February 3, 2021 Update

The rapid-testing process has identified 2 skilled nursing staff members that have tested positive for COVID-19 as of today. As a reminder, the state Department of Health considers 2 positive staff an "outbreak," so we are sorry to relay that our COVID restrictions related to group activities and non-communal dining must remain in place. We are thankful that all resident tests are negative in both skilled nursing and assisted living at this time.

Leo Tolstoy wrote in *War and Peace*, "The two most powerful warriors are patience and time." We seem to need more of both right now, but remain ever-optimistic that we will conquer COVID in due time.

Friday, January 29, 2021 Update

As of Friday afternoon, we had 100% of staff COVID tests reported from earlier in the week. All tests were negative. We continue to test staff twice weekly; results are not yet in from PCR testing completed on Thursday, January 28. Please check back for updates. All residents tested negative this week as well, with the exception of the person who was recently admitted from the hospital, on strict isolation, and who later tested positive for COVID (see Tuesday update). It seems all residents and staff who received the second COVID vaccination tolerated the dose, with no major side effects to report at this time. There were some staff and a few residents that received their first dose on

January 26, and a second vaccination for them is scheduled for February 16 at RCH. Snow preparations are underway, with staff parking changes communicated via email and Facebook.

Tuesday, January 26, 2021 Update

Our second vaccine clinic was a great success, with 90% of the skilled nursing residents and over 80% of the assisted living residents receiving their second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. Plus, additional residents chose to get their first dose this time around, for which we are grateful!

With this promising news comes the reality that the vaccine is not a magic bullet – it's one of a variety of tactics to help keep COVID at bay while we work toward greater immunity. We will continue to follow both the CDC guidelines and Department of Health mandates, including but not limited to:

- masks will still need to be worn by residents and staff
- social distancing will be required
- partitions will remain in the dining rooms
- diligent hand washing will be necessary

Several family members have asked what these vaccinations mean to the ability to visit their loved ones once again, but please understand visitation decisions are based on regulations outlined by the state of NJ and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) – unfortunately, it is not the decision of individual nursing centers to make. We do know that, until the positivity rate in the greater community decreases and the vaccine is more widely distributed, we cannot yet plan on family visits or get back to group activities as before. But we are making headway, and will be sure to keep you apprised of changes as they come.

We also wanted to inform you that a resident who was recently admitted from the hospital, and who has been on strict isolation precautions, did test positive today for COVID. The potential for this to occur in newly admitted residents is the reason we do need to adhere to 14 days of isolation upon admission. As we care for this resident, we ask for your prayers and good thoughts.

Friday, January 22, 2021 Update

With most all results received from this week's testing of residents and staff, we have no new positive cases!

- With 99% of skilled nursing RESIDENT results in, all are negative
- With 50% of assisted living RESIDENT results in, all are negative (note that AL residents were just tested yesterday and the remaining results will be in soon)
- With 100% of ALL STAFF results in for both skilled nursing and AL, all are negative

In other news, we completed our 28-day quarantine period in assisted living resulting from the one positive resident case we had at the end of December, so residents are able to eat together in the dining rooms again! They were beyond happy!

Travel writer and novelist Paul Theroux once wrote, ***“Winter is the season of recovery and preparation.”*** That fits well with our current situation. We are so ready to recover and move forward, and we continue to do all we can to prepare for the day when COVID is a distant memory.

Toward that end, our 2nd COVID vaccination clinic, for all those who received the 1st dose on January 5, will take place Tuesday, January 26! Staff members and residents who are ready to take the first dose can receive it that day as well!

Friday, January 15, 2021 Update

As we have previously reported, the Department of Health requires that all staff working in a long-term care environment be tested twice per week while the Middlesex County COVID test positivity rate remains high (currently 12.8%). Skilled nursing residents are tested once per week. We remain in compliance with these requirements, and the results for this week are as follows:

- There were no positive tests among skilled nursing residents!
- Yesterday we advised that one skilled nursing staff member had tested positive from PCR testing done this past Monday.
- Today (Friday) we identified one additional COVID-positive skilled nursing employee via BinaxNOW rapid testing.
- Both of these employees will quarantine at home until cleared to return to work.
- This week, two previously positive staff members returned to work.

For Assisted Living, all staff were tested and all were negative; Assisted Living residents will be tested next week, and if there are no positive tests, dining and small group activities will resume on January 22.

Another state mandate requires that long-term care communities establish a Respiratory Protection Program whereby staff are fit-tested for respirator use to help ensure their safety while caring for COVID patients. This was completed this week.

A highlight of the week was that the local media, the Suburban News, ran an article covering our vaccination clinic on January 5. Read all about it [here!](#)

Thursday, January 14, 2021 Update

With 90% of staff results received (as of this morning) from testing that took place Monday, January, 11, we have found one additional skilled nursing employee that has tested positive this week. We hope to have the 10% of outstanding staff results back by tomorrow. Of the previously positive staff members, only two are still out of the building and recovering. We continue to wish them the best as they are on the mend. Until we are clear of any infections for 28 days, congregate dining and activities will remain restricted in skilled nursing. In the meantime, we are happy to arrange for a virtual Facetime or Skype visit.

Keep in mind that staff throughout the building are all being tested twice per week to remain vigilant during the high positivity rate reported in Middlesex County.

Please note that residents in assisted living are now being tested every 14 days rather than once per week. Assisted living meals in the dining rooms and small group activities by floor will resume on Friday, January 22 if we continue to have no new positive tests in AL.

Friday, January 8, 2021 Update

Reformed Church Home received a surprise inspection from the Department of Health this week for an infection control survey, due to the high number of COVID positive cases in Middlesex County. We are thrilled to report that we were “**DEFICIENCY FREE!**” This finding reaffirms we are doing all we can with regard to handwashing, sanitation, and infection control in general throughout the building.

Because of the high incidence of COVID in the surrounding region, staff are now being tested twice per week. Results obtained Wednesday and Thursday (and reported in the January 7 update below) showed two additional skilled nursing staff have contracted the virus and remain at home; one nurse who was positive has now returned to work.

Residents are now being tested once per week, and with about 90% of the skilled nursing results in as of Friday afternoon, all are negative! For assisted living, with 98% of this week's results received, all are likewise negative! We hopefully will receive all outlying results for the remaining residents over the weekend.

Our other big news this week was the completion of our first round of vaccinations for residents and staff. Walgreens will return on January 26 to administer the second dose. Thank you to everyone for their cooperation and patience with the consent form process.

Thursday, January 7, 2021 Update

Late yesterday, we received positive results for 2 more staff members in skilled nursing. So we are sharing this information to keep you apprised of our status. Our vaccination clinic on January 5 was a success, with minimal to no side effects experienced in residents and staff who received the vaccine, which is good news!

Monday, January 4, 2021 Update

As we embark on a new year filled with much hope, we wanted to provide an update regarding our COVID status.

We have one new staff member in skilled nursing who tested positive following exposure at home. So this person is quarantining at this time. All other test results received to date from testing done last week for all staff and residents were negative. We will keep you posted if anything changes. Our vaccine clinic in conjunction with Walgreens will be held on January 5. What a positive way to start this year in anticipation of a return to more normal routines. Of course, that won't happen immediately, but the increased protection provided by the COVID vaccine gives us hope that the coming year will be a good one!

Thursday, December 31, 2020

For our last update of 2020, we must relay that we have 2 more skilled nursing staff members that have tested positive for COVID-19. Both employees remain home with mild symptoms. One skilled nursing staff member recovered from an earlier COVID infection and was able to return to work. All residents and staff were tested on Tuesday, and thus far, no other positive results have emerged, so we are hopeful that we will enter the new year with no new cases.

Thank you to all that were able to complete the vaccine consent forms – and just in the nick of time! We received word today that our clinic for skilled nursing residents, assisted living residents, and RCH staff will be held on Tuesday, January 5th with Walgreens (no longer CVS). We were fortunate to be assigned so quickly and for everyone to be accommodated in one day!

Tuesday, December 29, 2020

As per our phone conversations/messages from earlier today with each resident's primary contact, we wish to reiterate that Assisted Living must move back to Phase 0 of the reopening plan as a result of one COVID-positive case among Assisted Living residents. This is in accord with the NJ State Department of Health and CDC guidelines.

All Assisted Living residents must remain quarantined in their rooms at this time. The dining rooms will be temporarily closed, meals and medications will be delivered to the apartments, and activities staff will visit individual rooms as much as possible. Regarding testing, all Assisted Living residents were tested again today, and will be tested once per week rather than every other week until we move to the next phase.

In addition, two skilled nursing staff members have tested positive for COVID-19. As a result, our outbreak status is extended and we must remain in Phase 0. We are sorry to share this news as we approach year-end, having been hopeful that things would turn around for the new year. ***But it will...it will just take a bit longer.*** On that note, we are assembling all paperwork needed to set up our vaccine clinic for skilled nursing residents and staff. Thank you for your patience – we will be in touch with the administration date as soon as it is confirmed.

On a positive note, we also found out some good news this afternoon for Assisted Living! We have just been informed by Walgreens that we should begin preparing for COVID vaccine administration! Later today, we will be sending out the Walgreens consent form via DOCUSIGN to the AL resident's primary contact, so that you can sign electronically. Please complete it and return it immediately. If you do not wish your loved one to receive the vaccine, please reply to this email with the resident's name and NO VACCINE and I will cancel the Docusign message.

Please note that **we need all paperwork completed before Walgreens can schedule our clinic.** So we truly appreciate your cooperation and communication with us. As soon as we have news on the administration date, we will let you know.

Friday, December 18, 2020 Update – 6:30 pm

Late this afternoon, we received a positive COVID test for a skilled nursing resident. This resident has been placed on isolation with all necessary precautions taken. We wanted you all to know as quickly as possible. The families on the affected wing have also been called individually. This news is particularly disappointing because we had just been cleared from a prior outbreak per the Department of Health. Please send positive thoughts and prayers our way.

Friday, December 18, 2020 Update – 3:15 pm

We have been informed by CVS that our long-term care skilled nursing residents will be administered the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine just after Christmas. Nursing home residents have been given top priority to receive the vaccine, as well as health care workers.

We will be sending the resident's primary contact/power of attorney a consent form via Docusign, so that they can electronically sign for the resident ***if they wish to receive the vaccine.*** If the resident should ***not*** receive the vaccine, ***there is no need to return the form.*** Please look for the Docusign email later today. Please note the vaccine is administered in 2 doses. The second dose will be given 21 days after the first dose and the consent form will cover both doses.

As we are sure you will have many questions, here is a link to the CDC fact sheet on the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine, which received Emergency Use Authorization last week:
<https://www.cvdvaccine-us.com/images/pdf/fact-sheet-for-recipient-and-caregivers.pdf>

We have good news in that the local Department of Health has issued guidance that we have completed our outbreak period of 28 days from the time staff members were diagnosed with COVID-19. That being said, due to the surge in COVID cases in the larger Middlesex County community, DOH guidance restricts indoor visits for all nursing homes. At this time, we do have one resident in the building that acquired COVID during a recent hospitalization. That resident remains in

isolation in the COVID wing with all required PPE and precautions in place. We pray for a safe and speedy recovery!

If you have questions related to vaccine administration, please contact our Infection Control Preventionist, Jennifer Belandres, at jbelandres@rchnj.org.

Monday, December 14, 2020 Update

We wanted you to know that the NJ Department of Health has decided nursing homes should extend their every-other-day rapid testing schedule until at least December 18. (It was supposed to end today). We will keep you updated as to the next step.

Another update we need to advise about is that we do have one COVID-positive resident in-house at this time, following a hospital stay. Unfortunately, this person was exposed to COVID from hospital staff who were determined positive once this resident returned to RCH. Per our protocol, the resident was already in isolation in skilled nursing following a hospital return, with all precautions taken in case of such an occurrence. We will continue to monitor all staff and residents as necessary and follow strict sanitation and PPE use for everyone's maximum protection. Likewise, we pray for the speedy recovery of the affected resident.

We have no further update on vaccine availability at RCH, just that we are still registered at CVS for administration to residents and staff as soon as allowable. We will alert you as soon as we are scheduled. Since we may have very little notice, **please consider whether your loved one residing at RCH should receive the vaccine – if they are unable to make this decision for themselves, please discuss with family so that you can reply promptly once we request your approval.**

Friday, December 4, 2020 Update

This week we kicked off the rapid testing pilot program required by the state of NJ for all nursing homes, using the BinaxNOW™ test with staff members every other day. Things are going well so far – we are glad to report that we had no new positives this week among our staff! The rapid test only takes about 15 minutes to obtain results, and is very convenient for testing health technicians and essential vendors coming into the building. This pilot program is set to conclude December 14, and we will have an update next week whether it will be extended. (Note that if you are coming to the building to take someone to an essential medical appointment that cannot be postponed, please arrive 20-30 minutes early as you will be tested as well for the resident's safety).

On the vaccine front, we want you to know that we have registered with CVS for access to the COVID-19 vaccine, when it becomes available. Please start thinking **now** about whether or not the resident should receive the vaccine. More information will be forthcoming, but you may want to start having discussions with your loved one or with your family members, so it is not a last-minute decision.

Wednesday, December 2, 2020 Announcement

Please note the following **important announcements**:

- When picking up any resident for an essential doctor appointment between now and December 14, **PLEASE ARRIVE AT LEAST 20-30 MINUTES EARLY**, as you will be COVID-tested as part of the 14-day rapid-test pilot program for all staff and visitors to the building. If the state extend the dates for this testing, we will let you know.

- We have some outdoor events planned as the **holidays** approach, weather permitting of course. **PLEASE DROP OFF A WINTER WEIGHT COAT FOR YOUR LOVED ONE IF THEY DO NOT HAVE ONE AT RCH.**
- Please sign up for **only 1 patio chat** per week. We'd like to be sure everyone has the opportunity to visit.

Friday, November 27, 2020 Update

We hope that everyone had a nice Thanksgiving despite the limitations this year has brought. There is always hope that next year at this time COVID restrictions will be a distant memory and we can all celebrate with our families once again in traditional fashion, instead of an awkward Facebook Portal gathering like the one we had with my extended family. Just not the same as being in person and laughing at everyone's attempted jokes!

At this time, we have received some COVID testing results from earlier this week, and all are negative, but there are still several pending resident results for both Skilled Nursing and Assisted Living. If anything changes over the weekend with test results, we will let you know so please check your emails.

Please note that the pilot COVID-19 testing program mandated by the local Department of Health for all employees and visitors who come to nursing home facilities in the state of NJ will start on Monday, November 30 and run through December 14, 2020 to see how it goes. Employees and visitors (ie, essential vendors) must be tested every other day with either the rapid test or the PCR test, as opposed to once per week. Outdoor Patio Chats do not require this test.

We will continue our Outdoor Patio Chats and all are encouraged to check out available times for SKILLED NURSING at <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0D4EA4AE28A1FCC61-patio1>. For ASSISTED LIVING, please EMAIL Alberta at aromaniello@rchnj.org to check times. Skilled Nursing Patio Chats will now be held in the Skilled Nursing garden, with residents sitting in the 1st floor dining room, until further notice. Assisted Living Patio Chats will remain in the AL Patio and Garden. Both are in the back of the building – for the Skilled garden, please pass the loading dock (on the left) and park on the left side of the black bus stop. You will see the cones for family parking. Go to the gate and let the staff know that you are there for your visit.

Our roofing project will continue Monday morning with work on the A wing. Thank you for your patience and please be careful if visiting for a patio chat.

One last thing – but very important. Due to fire regulations, residents and staff are allowed to have artificial, appropriately fire-rated holiday decorations only. **No live trees, wreaths, roping, etc. are allowed due to state regulations for nursing homes and assisted living facilities.**

Friday, November 20, 2020 Update

Just like the news you have all undoubtedly been following about the increase in COVID cases throughout all the counties in NJ, RCH has been affected as well, albeit in a manageable way at this time. This week has been extremely busy with several updates to provide, so we have segmented this email into sections:

Recap of Weekly Testing Status

- Sunday, November 15 – One skilled nursing staff member tested positive via a rapid test obtained in the community. (Test at RCH earlier that week was negative so the infection was caught early). This staff member remains under quarantine at home.
- Monday, November 16 – One skilled staff member who tested positive two weeks prior returned to work. However, since the two staff overlapped within a 2-week period, we are considered in an “outbreak” per Department of Health definitions.
- Thursday, November 18 – One assisted living staff member was determined positive based on weekly testing. This staff member remains under quarantine at home. Since there is only one staff member in assisted living that is COVID-positive, it is not considered an outbreak and communal dining can continue, of course with increased precautions.

As a result of the above, we are presently closed to indoor visitation for both skilled nursing and assisted living. But there is some good news:

- Skilled Nursing will have Patio Chats on Thanksgiving Day and Friday, November 26 from the **skilled nursing garden** in the back of the building. Patio Chats will also be held on Saturday November 27 for skilled residents from the **AL patio and garden**. Please go to <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0D4EA4AE28A1FCC61-patio1> to see all available dates and times.
- Assisted Living will have Patio Chats on Thanksgiving Day and Friday, November 26 from the **AL patio and garden** in the back of the building. Please contact Alberta at aromaniello@rchnj.org to schedule a Patio Chat or if you have other questions.

Roof Project Underway

Very important: Please be aware that we are currently replacing our roof and this project will be ongoing over the next 2-3 weeks. We realize this is not ideal timing but the project must be completed before winter sets in. We ask that all staff, vendors, and families that may be near the building be extremely careful. We cannot prevent small debris from blowing off the roof during the windy weather we have been having. So please pay particular attention when near the front entrance, during Patio Chats, etc. Thank you for your understanding!

Needlepoint Bipolar Ionization (NPBI) Technology Comes to RCH

We wish to inform all our families, residents, and staff of an important step we have taken to improve air quality in our building. We recently installed an NPBI system from Global Plasma Solutions (GPS), which works through our ventilation system in all common areas, alcoves, and corridors throughout the building. NPBI is an air cleaning system that uses ions to disrupt surface proteins of the pathogens they come in contact with, reducing the volume of infectious pathogens by

deactivating them. The system also improves the efficiency of filtration. Independent tests have determined the GPS system reduces harmful pathogens, including COVID-19, but all standard PPE and safety measures (masks, social distancing, hand washing) are essential. We felt it was important to make this investment to do everything possible to reduce exposure to the coronavirus in our building. We will post more information on this technology in the next few days.

Thank you all so much for your patience, and for reading this very long email! Our goal, as always, is to be completely transparent and keep everyone up to date on what is happening in our building, which we trust offers some peace of mind at this difficult time.

Tuesday, November 17, 2020 Update

An important and timely article was just published on NorthJersey.com, a USA Today website, titled *"NJ COVID: Don't take your loved ones out of nursing homes for Thanksgiving, officials plead."* It includes a summary of important guidance that the NJ State Department of Health provided to all providers on Monday, November 16 regarding the upcoming holiday season. We will follow the stated procedure if a resident leaves the building for a family gathering (upon return, the resident will need to quarantine for 14 days until we are sure no COVID symptoms emerge.) Read the full article [here](#).

We know this Thanksgiving will be like no other, and ask that families carefully consider the risks of bringing your loved one home. Our activities department will continue with Patio Chats and Skype calls during the Thanksgiving week as much as possible. Thank you so much for your understanding and cooperation with this very difficult request that the State has instructed for all senior living environments.

Monday, November 16, 2020 Update

We were informed on November 15 that one of our staff members tested positive for COVID based on a rapid test that was done off-site. Due to this unfortunate circumstance we are currently considered by Department of Health standards as in an "outbreak." (An outbreak is defined as 2 or more staff members or 1 resident testing positive. Another staff member tested positive almost 2 weeks ago.)

As per state regulations and Reformed Church Home's Outbreak Plan (which you can read [here](#)) the following precautionary steps will be taken immediately to help ensure the safety of all:

- Communal dining is on hold and all skilled residents will resume tray services to their rooms or alcoves starting with Breakfast on Monday morning.
- All skilled residents will be tested today and weekly under the guidelines.
- Non-essential medical consulting services (podiatry, dentist, etc.) will temporarily be restricted.
- Our nurse practitioner will coordinate services for anyone requiring emergency or essential care.
- We will limit visits of residents to doctor's offices for essential appointments only. We can take advantage of telemedicine if necessary.

- Indoor visitation will remain suspended until we have 14 days with no new positive COVID cases. In the interim, we will honor any appointments already scheduled this week as Patio Chats. The Patio Chat schedule with remaining openings for this week and next week is now available at: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0D4EA4AE28A1FCC61-patio1>
(PLEASE NOTE: **FRIDAY Patio Chats will take place from the Skilled Nursing garden**, with residents at the 1st floor dining room windows. All other Patio Chats will be from the AL patio/garden. Any questions, please contact Amy Wendel at awendel@rchj.org.)

We understand this news is disappointing and nothing you/we wanted to hear on a Monday morning. Please know that we will remain vigilant and use what we have learned over the past 8 months to protect our residents, staff, and families however possible. Thank you for your understanding and support.

Friday, October 23, 2020 Update

We are gratified to report that for the third week in a row, we have had no new positive cases reported among residents or staff. As a result, we are able to pilot a move back to the skilled nursing dining rooms, beginning with the second floor. Ten tables with Plexiglas dividers will be in place, with each table accommodating 2 residents. Next week we will have more information on additional dining updates.

As many of you may know, earlier this week the New Jersey Department of Health announced plans for nursing home facilities to begin reopening to indoor visitation as the weather turns colder. There are still many points requiring clarification but it is finally a step in the right direction! Our team continues to meet to define our policies and procedures. In-services are planned next week with industry leaders to define best practices.

Assisted living residents continue to enjoy meals in the dining rooms and small group activities.

Indoor AL visitation is going well, and 5 appointments were booked via SignUpGenius.com.

A highlight of the week was our Halloween Fly-By Parade...we wish to thank so many families for taking the time to participate in full costume and with decorated vehicles.

Friday, October 17, 2020 Update

Because of the Columbus Day holiday, testing for residents and staff took place a bit later than usual, but as of Friday afternoon, October 17, all results have been negative! We have passed an important milestone – 14 days without a COVID-positive test in skilled nursing. Now the challenge is to make it through an additional 14 days (per NJ Department of Health guidelines) so that we can progress to Phase 1 of reopening, which will allow us to serve in the dining rooms (with social distancing) and small group activities. Please check back for further updates.

Friday, October 9, 2020 Update

We have good news to share...as of today, we have had no new staff cases this week, and all employees that had tested positive over the past few weeks have been able to return to work. Note that these recent staff cases were likely false positives, which is a silver lining of sorts. Former British football (soccer) player Maurice Setter showed great insight when he remarked: ***“Many people***

miss the silver lining because they are looking for gold.” We aren’t taking any bit of good news for granted these days!

We remain grateful for each small victory in the battle against COVID.

We still await clear direction from the NJ Department of Health regarding changes to visitation policies as the weather starts to turn colder. As soon as we receive the information, we will share it on our website and email it to our families.

Sunday, October 4, 2020 Update

We do want you to be aware that we received word on Friday afternoon of a positive test result in an skilled nursing administrative staff member (who does not interact with residents). This person is asymptomatic and will quarantine at home for the necessary 10 days.

AL residents continue to enjoy the dining room and small group activities within their circles. We had expected to hear an update from Governor Murphy’s office at 5 pm Friday regarding new visitation guidance for nursing homes, but that never transpired. We are disappointed of course but hope to hear something early this week.

Friday, September 25, 2020 Update

This week, things have remained substantially the same at Reformed Church Home, although we did have one asymptomatic staff member test positive as determined by the weekly screening process. No residents are positive at this time, and previous staff home on quarantine have been cleared to return to work, which is a double blessing!

We and many other nursing facilities in the state are concerned about the potential for false positive tests to be affecting our ability to move through the phases of reopening. Until a change is made to the guidelines, we must wait and comply with the state regulations. At this point, Skilled Nursing remains in Phase 0, while Assisted Living is in Phase 1 (which allows for meals in the dining room with adequate partitioning and social distancing, as well as some small group activities.) Stay tuned for more information as things evolve.

Friday, September 18, 2020 Update

The weather turned a bit cooler this week making for pleasant outdoor activities such as two outdoor concerts with talented singers. Silver Linings at Old Bridge, the local senior center, came by with the Mayor and staff to drop off hand-crocheted pocket scarves for each of our residents. This was a service project for Senior Center Month and we are so happy to be the recipients. Our art instructor, Nina, is back doing one on one art classes/painting on canvas. Check out our Facebook page for more details about all the ways our fabulous Activities staff has been brightening the days for our residents. Here’s what else is going on in the Home:

Testing continued this week, **but fortunately we have not identified any new or additional cases!**

The skilled nursing resident who tested positive early last week has been cleared as of today, which is wonderful news. At present, two staff members remain home on quarantine and doing well.

- The AL dining rooms – which opened on September 9 fully decked out with balloons and decorations – had a temporary closure this week, to be extra vigilant. But they are scheduled to reopen on Monday, so long as there are no cases reported over the weekend.

- As part of our Outbreak Response Plan, we now have a toll-free number for families to call in with questions and concerns related to COVID-19. This number is: **(848) 230-6427**. Callers can leave a message on this line day or night, and a manager will address your concerns and/or call you to answer your question. **Please note that typical medical questions and inquiries about residents should still be directed to the Unit Manager or the appropriate department.** The receptionist can help direct your call. The toll-free number is for non-urgent calls but the messages will be checked frequently.

Saturday, September 12, 2020 Update

Unfortunately, we learned this morning of another staff member that has tested positive from the employee screening tests taken on Thursday. So at this time, we have 1 resident and 4 staff members that tested positive. However, 2 staff members from last week that were asymptomatic have now tested negative and are able to return to work next week.

We are in close contact with the Department of Health to ensure we are implementing all necessary procedures in this uptick. Thankfully, we are so much better prepared than the early months of the pandemic, now having the testing capabilities, sanitizing protocols, PPE inventory, and policies in place. We will post additional updates on our website as necessary.

Friday, September 11, 2020 Update

Yesterday, we shared that a resident has tested positive for COVID-19. One staff member that has interacted with this resident has also tested positive based on results received today, so this employee is quarantining at home. The good news is that we have the ability to test all residents and staff at least once per week and we know at this time no other positive cases are in the building, and we can quickly screen individuals if deemed necessary or if symptoms arise.

We know this is not the update anyone wanted to hear, especially today, which already has a somber note. But we have learned through the past 19 years, and the past 6 months in particular, that we are resilient! Just like in the months after September 11, 2001, we will look back in amazement at all the things that can be accomplished when we come together to help each other, especially in caring for our residents when they need us most. Take care and stay safe.

Thursday, September 10, 2020 Update

Late today, we received word that a skilled nursing resident who was tested for COVID on Tuesday this week has positive results. All other skilled nursing residents were also tested on Tuesday, and all were negative. We have implemented all cleaning, sanitizing, PPE use, and preventative measures as per CMS guidelines and are awaiting further guidance from the department of health. One thing we do know is that we will need to wait a total of 28 days before progressing from the Phase 0 regulations we currently have in place to Phase 1 activities in skilled nursing.

Please note that many staff members were tested on Tuesday as part of our weekly screening. No new staff members were identified as positive. The two employees that tested positive last week (and by the way who subsequently tested negative when re-tested immediately thereafter) did not have any contact at all with the newly-diagnosed resident.

We will keep you posted of any new developments.

Thursday, September 3, 2020 Update

A lot of headway has been made this week in our efforts to prepare for moving from Phase 0 to Phase 1 of a reopening plan...but unfortunately, we have met with a setback.

Following testing on Monday August 31, two Skilled Nursing staff members were found COVID-positive – thankfully, neither person has direct contact with residents, both are asymptomatic, and now remain at home. So in order to comply with State guidance, our Skilled Nursing and Rehab floors will remain in Phase 0 for at least 28 days. (We are considered to have an active outbreak, which will be cleared once 14 days have passed from the original positive tests. We will then need to wait an additional 14 days once the outbreak is considered cleared before we can move from Phase 0 to Phase 1.) We will resume weekly testing of all residents and will closely monitor for symptoms of infection. We will continue to put all modifications in place so we are ready to lessen restrictions when the time is right.

Regarding Assisted Living, we have wonderful news! We are continuing our Phase 1 reopening plan, which allows for communal dining (with certain adjustments). The AL dining rooms will be back in use, barring any unforeseen circumstances, on **Wednesday, September 9, 2020**. Plexiglass dividers are being installed for everyone's safety, and we will reinforce social distancing, but this return to eating with friends and neighbors will be a welcome change after many months apart! Please note that before we enter Phase 1 next week, all AL staff members will be tested as always during the weekly testing process.

So the bad news is, we are not there yet, but the good news is, we are getting closer. Please keep praying for the success of our reopening plans and for the return to a COVID-free building!

Friday, August 21, 2020 Update

We have had a busy week distilling the guidance from the State of NJ on how we must prepare for advancing from Phase 0 to Phase 1, 2 and 3 of a reopening plan for long term care facilities. We also had an outdoor concert for Assisted Living, a Windowsill Serenade with talented violinists sponsored by Holisticare Hospice, and an art show so residents could display their handywork and admire that of their neighbors.

But the best news is...***we have been officially removed from Middlesex County's Department of Health active outbreak list!*** An active outbreak is considered concluded when there have been no positive COVID cases in any residents or staff members for 28 days or more, which we reached last week. Nonetheless, it was gratifying to receive the official letter! Now onto more pressing things...

The State requires that a list of 10 components be in place for any long term care facility to advance from Phase 0 to Phase 1, so our current focus is on satisfying that list and submitting documentation that we are ready. Basically, a plan must be devised by each facility that will be followed in case of a future outbreak, including varied communication methods to effectively share information with families and staff, back-up systems to secure staff in the case of a staffing shortage, acquisition of at least 2 months' worth of PPE, assurance that testing procedures and timelines can be met...and that's just naming a few key areas.

We hope to be able to share more detailed information on this outbreak response plan and submit it to the State as soon as possible. Please know we are working as fast and as focused as we possibly can to make progression to Phase 1 and 2 a reality. (Note that all NJ facilities are currently considered in Phase 0, and Phase 3 is not yet achievable because the statewide reopening is only in Phase 2.)

Since that's a lot of information to digest, I'll leave you with a simple thought from author L.G. Akita... ***“Neither lose heart nor hope.”***

Friday, August 14, 2020 Update

This week's update is especially gratifying...

I am happy to report that we have gone more than 30 days without having a COVID-positive resident or staff member! Weekly testing continues, but I want to commend our employees for their dedication to the Home and for taking extra measures to protect themselves when outside the work environment, to ultimately keep our residents as safe as possible. We are blessed with every single staff member that gives unselfishly every day to care for our wonderful residents.

Many of you may have heard that earlier this week, Governor Murphy's office released Executive Directive No. 20-026, with detailed guidance for the resumption of services in all long-term care facilities in the state of New Jersey. This guidance relates not only to nursing homes, but also assisted living residences, comprehensive personal care homes, residential healthcare facilities, and dementia care homes. The directive, which is over 40 pages long, outlines the criteria that must be met for any long-term care facility to advance from Phase 0 of reopening (which all facilities are currently in) to Phase 1, 2 or 3. While we are thrilled to have the information we need to begin moving forward, we want you to know that the requirements are extreme and require implementation of many new precautions and procedures.

It will take our team some time to distill the guidelines into a clear roadmap, with contingency plans along the way. Although we are not ready to share any specifics at this time, please know we will reach out very soon with information on potential next steps.

Thank you for your continued support and patience during this unprecedented time. Though we are about to embark on a whole new set of rules to safely care for our vulnerable residents, we will forge ahead with the inspiration of little known poet, novelist, and rock music devotee Ambrose Redmoon, who said:

“Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the judgment that something else is more important than one's fear.”

Please know that nothing is more important to us than the quality of life and ultimate safety of our residents, as well as the staff and caregivers that help them every day.

Friday, July 31, 2020 Update

The past month has been filled with weekly COVID testing of all residents and staff. During this period, no residents tested positive; in fact, residents have been COVID-free since June 15 when the last two recovering residents left our COVID isolation wing! In addition, all staff that had been COVID-positive at some point during the past 4 months have now recovered, and all were able to return to work. So at present, the building is COVID-free! Weekly testing continues, and further updates on COVID status will be posted. As of July 28, 2020, the NJ Department of Health updated the travel advisory, citing 34 states from which travelers should quarantine if arriving in NJ (whether as a destination or to return home from a vacation in one of the country's hot spots.) This has affected outdoor visitation if family members have recently traveled, so please call ahead if trying to schedule an outdoor visit.

Friday, June 26, 2020 Update

Reformed Church Home received a visit today from the New Jersey Department of Health for a surprise inspection, specifically the COVID-19 Focused Infection Control Survey. The Home was

found to be deficiency-free, and in compliance with specific state and federal infection control regulations established as a result of COVID-19. We were also found to have implemented the recommended COVID-19 preparation practices set forth by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Some of the infection control parameters assessed included staff and resident hand washing techniques; sanitation procedures for high-touch surfaces; judicious use of personal protective equipment (PPE) such as masks, gowns, and gloves; adherence to social distancing guidelines for mealtimes and activities; and implementation of cleaning strategies using products known to protect against viruses for extended periods. We are extremely proud to have been found deficiency free during this crucial survey, as we strive to keep our building COVID-free and our residents safe.

Friday, June 19, 2020 Update, 7 pm –

This afternoon at 4 pm, we received an Executive Directive from Governor Murphy's office updating the Visitation Guidance for long term care facilities.

We are very happy to inform you that the restrictions for visitation are changing to allow for **outdoor visits on a "by appointment only" basis**. We will work diligently to put the proper procedures in place to maintain the safety of our residents, staff, and all family members. As you can imagine, these procedures take time to plan and correctly implement, and it is now **our first priority** to facilitate visits for our residents who have missed their loved ones so much.

Although the Governor's directive suggests that in-person outdoor visitation can begin on June 21, 2020, "provided that the facility implements all of the...safety, care, and infection prevention and control measures," please understand that this list of requirements is long and complex. For this reason, we are writing to let you know that in order to meet the guidelines and complete the required attestation documents the State requires before visits can begin, we feel we will be prepared to accept visitor appointments starting Wednesday, June 24. Please note that among other limitations, only 2 visitors per resident, per visit, will be allowed per the directive.

We know this is very exciting news, and we appreciate your patience for just a few more days so we can do the work that needs to be done to get this right! We will contact families via email as soon as we are ready to safely reunite our residents and their loved ones in an outdoor location with registration protocols, social distancing, and staffing requirements all in place. Please continue to check our website for updates.

Monday, June 15, 2020 Update –

We have amazing news! Today, the last 2 residents who had been recovering in the COVID wing were discharged, and at this point in time, we have NO residents that are COVID positive. This is such wonderful news and we wanted to share it with all of you who have been praying and sending positive thoughts, caring messages, and unending support! We also want to recognize the dedicated nursing staff who have consistently given amazing care under such difficult circumstances. Today, we also celebrate the fact that another staff member has been cleared to return to work!

Moving forward, we will continue to abide by testing requirements and are anticipating further guidance from the state on when and how visitor restrictions can be lifted, testing in the long term, and other directives that are ultimately designed to keep our vulnerable seniors safe. As soon as we have received this guidance, we will send out to our families and post on this website.

Friday, June 5, 2020 Update –

Over the past two weeks, we have conducted many COVID tests among all residents and staff per the new state and federal government regulations, with the goal of identifying any positive individuals, especially those that may be asymptomatic. Ultimately, the goal is to have all individuals in the building test negative, with twice weekly or weekly testing thereafter to ensure the population is stable before we can progress to things like small group activities or socially distant communal dining. If at any point in the process positive tests are received, the process must begin over again. So the next few important weeks will be unpredictable, but we are trying our best and have had good news to report of late.

As of today, most of the residents who tested positive for COVID-19 since mid-March have recovered. Likewise, two-thirds of the staff members that acquired the virus have been cleared to return to work following a period of self-quarantine.

Based on directives from the Governor of the State of NJ, group activities and communal dining are still prohibited. We await further instructions on the phased approach to reopening the state's nursing homes that will be employed. As we find out more, we will provide updates in our daily family emails, as well as on this site.

Wednesday, May 14, 2020 Update –

Reformed Church Home is proud, relieved, and grateful to announce that one of our residents diagnosed COVID positive almost one month ago has now recovered and is a COVID SURVIVOR! The first of our residents to recuperate from this devastating virus, we are actively monitoring additional residents who are being cared for in our isolation wing, where residents found positive or with suspicious symptoms are treated by dedicated nurses and aides. These team members remain with their assignments as needed to prevent cross contamination to other areas of the building. We are also thrilled that 6 of the 11 staff members that tested positive early on have recovered and have been cleared to return to work. Although the challenges remain indefinite as we navigate this new reality, we are encouraged at the bravery of our staff and the resolve of those residents that have been afflicted. They all remain in fairly good spirits, and in most cases symptoms have been mild. As announced by Governor Murphy, all nursing home staff must undergo COVID testing to identify carriers of the virus that should not be working with the residents or in the building, and we have initiated that process as of today. All staff will be tested by the deadline of May 26 as testing kits become available. We fully support this decision, and we have been testing asymptomatic staff on floors in which we have seen new COVID cases to aggressively stay ahead of this disease. We continue to email and call our families as needed (with daily emails to advise of changes in case numbers) to provide specific information, keep the lines of communication open, and let them know we support them and their loved one in this very difficult time.

Friday, May 1, 2020 Update –

We have had stable numbers for both residents and staff diagnosed as positive for COVID-19 over the previous week, and we continue to update our families via daily emails and also phone calls as necessary to keep everyone updated. We are grateful for the outpouring of support via our Employee Appreciation Fund to help thank those working so hard to care for the residents. We have compiled a wish list of items for residents and staff, which you can access by clicking [here](#). We have had several deliveries of PPE from various sources, and in fact some family members have gone above and beyond in reaching out to their resources to help us. We also expect to receive supplies from the federal government through FEMA, which has now decided to send an allocation of PPE to each nursing home in the country based on typical census and numbers of staff. Our employees are

doing everything possible to protect the residents and halt transmission of the virus. Thank you to all for the support we have received from families, local businesses, our board of directors, vendors, and community organizations. It does lessen the load a bit...

Tuesday, April 21, 2020 Update –

Some families may have seen news articles published on April 20 regarding the numbers of residents testing positive or dying from Covid-19 reported by individual nursing homes throughout the state. The numbers were supposed to reflect the daily statistics that nursing homes are self-reporting to the NJ Department of Health. However, in the case of Reformed Church Home, the numbers were not correct.

An article published in the *Asbury Park Press* (and summarized in various other online media) stated we had 12 confirmed cases among residents as of April 20, with no deaths. However, our total count has been and continues to be 8 total residents that have tested positive. We reached out to the lead reporter on this story and found that they have received several complaints that the numbers are inaccurate. Stay tuned as we expect an updated article to clarify or explain more about the DOH list. Since the beginning of this horrible pandemic, we have remained committed to full transparency about the number of cases affecting the home, good or bad. We continue to send over 200 family members daily updates via email, with phone calls as necessary to advise of significant changes in case status, and frequent updates provided to residents and staff.

To protect the residents, we have begun aggressively testing asymptomatic staff members, as more test kits come in. About 1/2 of staff testing positive have no symptoms, so this virus continues to prove both confounding and elusive. Coworkers in each affected department persevere, committed to getting this under control. You may or may not have agreed with his politics, but Newt Gingrich was right on the money when he said this: "Perseverance is the hard work you do after you get tired of doing the hard work you already did."

We also wanted to thank so many families and vendors for their generous support of our Employee Appreciation Fund and gift card collection. The response has been overwhelming and we intend to acknowledge each of your donations with a personal letter. These will be mailed as soon as possible, so thank you for your patience. Here's the link again to the ways you can help the staff. <https://reformedchurchhome.com/reformed-church-home/blog/notices-for-visitors/> Thank you for your continued support!

Saturday, April 11, 2020 Update –

We have tried very hard over the past few weeks to keep our families well-informed about the health and well-being of the Reformed Church Home community. No one ever imagined that we as a society would have to deal with a global pandemic that threatens the most vulnerable among us – our elders and those with underlying medical conditions.

The news this past week has been particularly disturbing with regard to infections in nursing homes, particularly in the northern part of our state. As of today, there are over 58,000 positive cases in New Jersey, many among the nursing home population. Although we have remained vigilant, positive cases have been identified at Reformed Church Home, now including in our staff. In order to be completely transparent, we are providing updates via phone calls and emails to our residents and families, and alerting our staff and vendors as well, in accord with regulations set forth by the State of NJ Department of Health. We will continue to share this information whether it improves or worsens at our beloved Home.

As you can imagine, staffing is limited at this time, but we are committed to serving our residents first and foremost while attending to their physical and emotional needs. Our staff members who remain devoted, resilient, and upbeat. Every department has gone above and beyond – nursing, activities, maintenance, housekeeping, accounting, dining, social services, development, marketing, admissions, and of course Pastor Sam. We are indebted to our Director of Development, Paula LeBlanc, for ensuring the live feed camera that was temporarily down is fixed and functional for the Easter services this weekend.

Many family members, friends, vendors, and local businesses have so generously donated food, supplies, and gift cards or money to our Employee Appreciation Fund to allow us to have catered lunches, dinners, and other treats, which keeps everyone motivated and upbeat. If you wish to donate to this fund, see more information on our website in the COVID-19 Updates > Notices tab, or contact Paula at 732-607-9230 ext 108.

We wish to ensure families that we are taking every precaution at this time, including:

- *All staff are screened daily with temperature checks and screening questions before each shift.*
- *All staff are instructed and ENCOURAGED to stay home if they have any symptoms at all. Those in whom we discover emerging symptoms while at work are immediately sent home.*
- *All staff (medical, activities, administration, maintenance, housekeeping, etc.) are required to wear masks. Gowns and gloves are reserved for medical and nursing staff, and for some activities staff as required.*
- *We have limited the movement of staff to certain floors/sides of the building, to deter cross contamination.*
- *If a resident develops any symptoms of COVID-19, (fever, respiratory issues, cough, sore throat, or GI symptoms), the emergency contact will be notified, we will test the resident if indicated and monitor them closely, update the family, and discharge to the hospital if symptoms warrant it.*

Families are reminded to check their emails for specific updates and to call Reformed Church Home if they have specific questions related to their loved one in our care.

Tuesday, April 7, 2020, 7:30 pm Update –

At the present time, Reformed Church Home has no confirmed positive cases of COVID-19 in the facility. On April 5, we shared information about our isolation wing that has been set up in accordance with CDC and CMS guidelines. This area is presently being used to monitor current residents that have relatively mild respiratory symptoms and also for a few recent hospital admissions to ensure an adequate quarantine period before integrating them into the general population. One nurse per shift is assigned to care for those on the isolation wing, which is blocked off by plastic sheathing to create a barrier. The nurse remains on that wing throughout the shift, so

that cross contamination to other parts of the floor or building is avoided. We remain committed to ensuring the health and safety of our residents and staff. The road ahead is long, but we will keep you informed of status changes at the Home. Thank you for your patience and cooperation.

Sunday, April 5, 2020 Update, 3:15 pm –

As the COVID-19 reality hits home for RCH, we want to share some information about our preparedness activities to assure you we are doing everything possible to prepare for the worst while hoping for the best. We have been working behind the scenes for weeks, following the CMS and CDC guidelines to prepare our facility to deal with presumptive or positive cases while protecting our residents and staff.

As a result, we have recently relocated current residents from “A” wing on the skilled nursing third floor, in order to create an isolation wing. Any new admissions – yes, the hospitals are still sending us admissions because they have to make room for the potential surge – will be assigned to the isolation wing and ideally quarantined in a private room. This is to help ensure that if symptoms develop once the patient comes from the hospital, they are already separated from other residents. Of course, if individuals at RCH test positive for COVID-19 with manageable symptoms, they can also be appropriately monitored in this area. Residents will be sent out to the hospital as deemed necessary by our medical staff to ensure the highest level of care possible.

Please note that specific staff members have been assigned to work in the isolation wing – and we thank them for their dedication and for upholding the highest standards of their profession during this crisis. All staff must wear masks all day throughout the building. Medical-grade masks are for aides, nurses, housekeeping, dietary, and medical personnel. Non-medical staff wear cloth masks at all times, and N95 masks are available at RCH in limited supply and are reserved for dealing with confirmed cases or highly suspicious cases.

Our Housekeeping and Maintenance departments have been following all CDC guidance and have received special in-servicing regarding cleaning in the age of Covid-19. They too are our unsung heroes in all of this.

Please know we are doing everything within our power to protect our residents and prepare to help those in need. Your prayers at this time are much appreciated.

Saturday, April 4, 2020 7 pm Update –

On Friday, April 3, at 6 pm, we learned that two residents from one specific room in our assisted living residence tested positive for COVID-19. The affected residents are receiving treatment in the hospital and we pray for their safety and healthy return. These residents were quarantined from early in the week, pending the results of testing which included the COVID-19 test. At that time, we immediately put isolation precautions in place so that any staff member entering the room to provide care was fully gowned, masked, gloved, and protected, with those items properly disposed of in hazard bins each time staff left the room. I am grateful to our staff for their full cooperation and professionalism.

I know many questions have arisen as a result of this news. Please be assured we have been preparing for this inevitable occurrence and are following all CDC, CMS, and DOH guidelines as we navigate this extreme challenge. In accordance with guidance by the Middlesex County Health Department, we are requesting that all assisted living residents remain in their rooms for the next 14 days. Medications and meals will be delivered to the rooms for all residents. Since this disease is known to spread rapidly and conditions can change very quickly, we have requested everyone's cooperation without exception.

We also wanted you to know about the actions we are taking to protect all residents and help prevent additional cases:

- We have instituted increased cleaning and disinfection procedures in accordance with all CDC guidelines.
- Assisted Living residents will continue to have temps monitored daily and are instructed to advise medical staff if they are not feeling well (respiratory symptoms, sore throat, cough).
- Residents will be tested for COVID-19 only if symptomatic.
- Mail will be delivered directly to the Assisted Living rooms within 2 days of receipt so there is no need to visit the mailboxes.
- Skilled nursing residents and rehab residents have temperatures taken daily on each shift.
- Beginning March 28, the use of masks by all staff members was mandated. For now we have an adequate supply of masks, and non-medical personal are wearing cloth masks that have been donated to conserve PPE for nurses and aides.
- Staff have been and will continue to remain in their designated areas and floors.
- We have many other preparedness strategies and behind the scenes preparations ongoing or in place. We will provide more details as the need arises.

I know this is very difficult and we all miss life prior to COVID-19 but please understand that these measures are put in place for the safety and welfare of all the residents and staff. Thank you for your patience, support, faith, and prayers. I know better days lie ahead and we will be rewarded for our vigilance. Kate Shepard, Executive Director

Friday, March 27, 2020 Update, 5:30 pm –

As we complete our second week of navigating our “new normal” in the world of coronavirus, we are so thankful to say we have no cases of COVID-19 at Reformed Church Home. The health and wellness of our residents continues to be our top priority, but so too is our focus on compassion, engagement, and empathy for our seniors at this difficult time.

Within the bounds of the restrictions that have been placed upon us, we are committed to finding novel ways to reach out to families. Our Patio Chats this week brought tears to the eyes, not just for the family members standing across the glass windows from their loved ones, but for our staff members who made this successful event possible. That’s because we really are a family, and just as any family comes closer together in a crisis, so too have all of our employees in nursing, activities, social work, therapy, ministry, admissions/marketing, development, reception, maintenance, housekeeping, food service, human resources, accounting, assisted living, and on and on.

It takes a real team to accomplish what we have done these past two weeks. I cannot thank our staff enough for their commitment and boundless energy, and I want to express my appreciation to all the

families that have recognized their efforts with kind words, letters, posts, flowers, donations, and more. Please keep praying for us and sending positive thoughts.

On a practical note, please note that effective March 28, 2020, ALL staff will be required to wear masks for the protection of themselves and all the residents.

With gratitude,

Kate Shepard

Executive Director/Administrator

Tuesday, March 24, 2020, 6:00 pm – We are relieved to report that no coronavirus cases have been diagnosed at Reformed Church Home at this time. We continue to try and keep spirits up, and are happy to announce we are now fostering two pups from Husky House in Matawan. They needed some love and attention in a good Home, and we are happy to provide countless loving residents and staff members to do just that. You too can rescue a shelter animal from Husky House or your local shelter at this challenging time. Animals are known to reduce stress and lower blood pressure, plus lift the spirits. We will continue to update you as to their adjustment and antics! We also have been facilitating family chats through the large windows on the first floor patio so residents could see their loved ones via something other than Skype. But we do continue to offer Skype or FaceTime sessions, so reach out to the Activities Department at extension 192 to arrange.

We are also making good use of our live feed camera broadcast from the MPR to individual resident rooms, with exercise in the mornings and spiritual services in the afternoon. More great activities are being planned so stay tuned for more information.

We'd like to thank you for your patience and support at this time — we appreciate the many positive thoughts, prayers, wishes, and gratitude so many of our families have expressed. We'll continue to do our best to keep this virus outside our doors and to keep the compassion flowing freely to all of your loved ones.

Saturday, March 21, 2020, 6:00 pm – We made it through another trying week, and are happy to say that we have not had any COVID-19 cases at Reformed Church Home. We continue to follow all CDC, CMS and DOH guidelines and must restrict visitors until further notice. All staff and essential medical personnel receive daily screenings and temps before their shifts. Non-communal dining continues, and residents and staff are constantly reminded about good handwashing practices. As the cases mount in Middlesex County, we so appreciate everyone's prayers and good wishes. Our Activities department has been working and thinking round the clock about ways to engage our residents and keep them feeling calm, loved, and comfortable. Although we know they miss all of their family members, we are taking extra efforts to keep everyone connected. We have done several Skype or FaceTime calls, helped residents create love letters to family and photographed them to send via email or post on Facebook, and have "Patio Chat" sessions scheduled for Tuesday and Wednesday March 24/25, if all continues to go well. We are able to accept supplies, birthday gifts, etc for residents if families bring them to the front door. Call our main number if you have any questions or concerns. Stay tuned for more updates, and stay safe! #Socialdistancing is the new normal. Sending virtual hugs.

Monday, March 16, 2020, 4:30 pm Update —

We are happy to report that we do not currently have any cases of COVID-19 at the Reformed Church Home. In addition to our visitor restrictions, we continue taking all the preventative measures previously outlined (see daily posts below). The Activities Staff continues to brainstorm to find

meaningful programs to keep our residents engaged while practicing social distancing. As soon as possible, we will try to share some of these activities on Facebook so you are aware of your family member's daily events. We encourage you to Skype with your loved one in order for them to feel connected in these uncertain times. We appreciate your thoughts and prayers. Stay well.

Sunday, March 15, 2020, 1:00 pm Update –

Reformed Church Home **does not** have any cases of COVID-19 at this time, but COVID-19 has been identified in increasing numbers in many counties throughout New Jersey. This development triggers heightened infection control practices and protocols as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) .

In accordance with CDC and CMS guidelines, we have stopped all large group activities in the multi-purpose room including religious services. We have also stopped all communal dining until further notice. As you already are aware, we have stopped all visitation unless it is an extreme situation. We successfully delivered trays to all residents today and we only hope to improve our efficiency from here.

All staff, necessary medical personnel and essential vendors continue to be admitted only after appropriate screening that includes taking the temperature and evaluation for signs or symptoms of a respiratory infection, such as fever, cough, shortness of breath, or sore throat.

The news about the spread of COVID-19 is concerning for us all. We understand that communication with your loved one is incredibly important and encourage you to communicate with them using the telephone, video chat, e-mail, or social media. We are also addressing creative ways to deliver activities to our residents in both skilled nursing and assisted living.

We continue to monitor information and guidance from the NJ Department of Health, CMS, CDC and are working with state and local public health and emergency preparedness officials to prevent the illness and strengthen our preparation for a possible outbreak. We will continue to keep you informed. Keep visiting this website for regular updates.

We appreciate your understanding in these uncertain times. Please continue to keep us in your thoughts and prayers.

Saturday, March 14, 2020, 4:00 pm Update —

While we do not have any cases of Coronavirus at Reformed Church Home, in light of the severity of the outbreak—and that the World Health Organization has characterized it as a pandemic—we must restrict all visitors, including family members, to Reformed Church Home at this time.

In accordance with the Guidelines issued today by The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), we are suspending communal dining and all group activities. Our activity and dining personnel will be working on creative solutions to these new restrictions.

We are actively screening all staff for fever, shortness of breath, cough and sore throat.

Again, I want to thank all the families and residents for their continued patience and understanding as we navigate through these uncharted waters. Our goal is to keep everyone safe and well. Please see additional information below from previous posts.

Please continue to keep us in your daily thoughts and prayers. Kate Shepard, Executive Director

Friday, March 13, 2020, 2:30 pm Update —

Over the past few days, we have been working diligently to review all materials related to the Coronavirus pandemic to make the best possible decisions for the Home. As stated previously, our goal is not to react to fear in the midst of this extreme challenge, but to be proactive in the

preventative measures we can take right now to — first and foremost — help protect our residents. Please be assured we are taking every measure feasible to keep the residents in our care—whom we consider our family—safe. Following is important information we want to share as of Friday afternoon, March 13, 2020:

- Effective Friday, March 13, 2020, we are restricting all nonessential visitors, including family members, from entering Reformed Church Home
- The front door will be locked beginning at 4 pm today onward. Anyone wishing to enter will use the phone in the vestibule to call the front desk #100 (8 am to 8 pm) or the nursing supervisor #157 from 8 pm to 8 am. Hand sanitizing wipes will be placed at the front door.
- We are asking residents to postpone all nonessential appointments or gatherings outside RCH.
- We have cancelled all Activities trips out to the community.
- We have suspended all tours of Skilled Nursing and AL.
- All staff members will be screened for symptoms upon entering the building, including temperature. Staff are instructed to self-report symptoms and stay home if they are sick or have come in contact with anyone diagnosed with Coronavirus.
- Essential vendors will be screened as well and must enter through the main front entrance.
- We are screening all new residents for respiratory illness prior to entering the building.
- Thursday observation in the Rehab Department for families has been suspended.
- Care Plan Conferences will all be done via phone.
- Family Council Support Group has been cancelled for March.
- If you would like to Skype with your family member, please contact the Activities Department at ext 192 to make arrangements.
- To limit unnecessary exposure to large groups, we may need to reschedule some planned activities. We strive to put some creative solutions for the activities program in place. Please be patient as we navigate through this.

We have posted safety posters around the building to remind residents of proper preventative measures, including direction to:

- Cover coughs & sneezes with your sleeve or tissue.
- Wash your hands often. *Use the wall-mounted hand sanitizers* throughout the building.

- Maintain a distance of 6 feet from others whenever possible and avoid touching, hugs, etc.

Thank you so much for your cooperation, and may God bless us and keep us all safe.

Kate Shepard

Executive Director/Administrator

Thursday, March 12, 2020, 3:30 pm Update —

There are no cases of Coronavirus at Reformed Church Home, but we are restricting all visitors effective Friday March 13, 2020.

In light of the severity of the Coronavirus outbreak, we must restrict all non-essential visitors, including family members, from entering the Reformed Church Home effective Friday, March 13, 2020. We know this is difficult news to hear during these challenging times, and it was a difficult decision for us to make. Our goal is not to react to fear in the midst of this complex time, but to be proactive in the preventative measures we can take right now as an organization. We've always prided ourselves on operating as a family. We assure you that we are taking every measure feasible to keep the residents in our care—which we consider our family—safe.

According to the World Health Organization, [the Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) has now been characterized as a global pandemic](#). **While we do not currently have cases of Coronavirus at Reformed Church Home**, much remains unknown about COVID-19's impact and we know the best time to put policies in place to effectively prevent or slow the spread of the virus is now rather than later.

We are posting signs on our entrances with these updates, and we are actively screening individuals, including staff, who need to come into the building. **If you believe a visit to our Home is essential, please contact us at least 24 hours prior to your arrival for consideration by calling 732-607-9230.**

We understand that connecting with loved ones is incredibly important, but we must put in place stringent measures that are in the best interest of the at-risk elders we serve, as well as our staff who provide the around-the-clock care necessary to keep our residents safe. We will continue to review our policies and update them as necessary.

We need your support and cooperation as we focus all efforts on the safety and well-being of our residents, staff and the community at large. Please assist us with notifying other family members and friends about these important measures, and stay tuned to this site for the latest updates. Also, please note:

- We are asking residents to **postpone all non-essential appointments** (routine doctor visits, hair appointments, etc.) outside the Home.
- We have cancelled all activity trips out to the community.
- We have suspended all tours.
- Thursday Rehab observation for families has been suspended.
- Care Plan Conferences will all be done via phone.
- If you would like to Skype with your family member, please contact the activities department.

732-607-9230 ext 192.

Thank you for your cooperation.

March 11, 2020, 5:10 pm Update —

Following is an update from Kate Shepard, Executive Director, regarding Coronavirus prevention at RCH.

We are closely monitoring the Coronavirus outbreak in New Jersey. This is an evolving situation and we're constantly reviewing and updating our processes to align with CDC and NJ Department of Health guidelines.

Keep checking our website to stay informed of updates, including visitation information and changes. At a time like this and because we care for one of the most at-risk populations, we must implement stringent measure to keep residents, staff—and ultimately the community—as healthy as possible. We need your patience and your cooperation in doing your part to reduce the spread of this disease. Please note:

- We do not currently have any cases of Coronavirus.
- We are asking residents to **postpone all non-essential appointments** (routine doctor visits, hair appointments, etc.) outside the Home.
- We will be canceling all activity trips out to the community.
- At this time we are **limiting visitors to adult, immediate family members, to visit in the resident's room or apartment only.**
- We are suspending all tours of skilled nursing and rehab floors. AL tours are currently allowed.

Thank you for your cooperation.

March 10, 2020, 3:50 pm Update —

As Reformed Church Home continues to monitor the Coronavirus outbreak, please see the important updates and recommendations below. We need everyone's support and cooperation to mitigate the risks associated with this disease.

- We do not currently have any cases of the Coronavirus in our facility.
- **In alignment with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)'s guidelines concerning higher-risk populations** such as the elderly, we encourage that only adults who are immediate family members visit our communities at this time so that we can limit potential exposure of illness within our home.
- All visitors should limit their movement within the facility to the resident room. Please reduce the amount of walking in the halls and avoid going to the dining room.

- All visitors must sign in at the front desk. Anyone with symptoms of illness should not visit and will be asked to leave.
- In alignment with guidance issued by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and the CDC, we are increasing our admissions screening procedures to assess symptoms of respiratory infection prior to a resident entering the facility.
- Out of an abundance of caution, and to allow our staff to continue focusing on increased infection prevention and control measures, we are limiting our residents' exposure to groups of people. As such, we will be working on a case-by-case and day-by-day basis to reschedule some planned activities within our facility.
- Our programs and activities are incredibly important components of quality of life for our residents. As we adjust activities schedules, we will work to incorporate creative solutions for residents to have access to activities without increased risk of exposure to illness.

Additional Statement from Kate Shepard, Executive Director, March 10, 2020: *"We're implementing more stringent measures at Reformed Church Home because we are caring for one of the most vulnerable populations at risk for the Coronavirus. We're making responsible—albeit difficult—decisions including limiting visitation and modifying activities within our home that involve close resident contact. In the event the number of confirmed positive cases increases, we may find it necessary to limit all visitation to the Home. We continue to encourage Facetime and Skype as an alternative to face to face visits. Our visitors, programs and activities are incredibly important components of our residents' daily lives so we're also exploring creative ways to keep offering meaningful activities while reducing the risk of exposure to illness. Each and every one of us has an important role to play in reducing the spread of the Coronavirus, and we need the community's support and patience as we respond to this evolving situation. We know that many of the measures we're putting into place are not ideal but your cooperation will help keep our residents and staff healthy, allowing us to better care for those we serve."*

March 9, 2020 – 5:00 pm — INFORMATION ON OUR PREPAREDNESS EFFORTS FOR COVID-19
 In an effort to address questions and concerns about COVID-19 and its potential impact at Reformed Church Home, this webpage will be updated to provide information to family members, residents, visitors and vendors. This is an evolving situation that we will closely monitor while we make every effort to ensure the safety of those we serve.

As Reformed Church Home continues to monitor the COVID-19 outbreak, please see the important updates and recommendations below. *We need everyone's support and cooperation to mitigate the risks associated with this disease.*

As always, the health and well-being of our residents is our top priority...

WE ARE CONCERNED AND PROACTIVE: We are concerned about the spread of the novel coronavirus. The people we serve are typically more vulnerable to the virus and the disease it causes, COVID-19. We are taking action.

OUR FOCUS IS ON INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL:

- We have emergency preparedness and infection prevention and control plans in place. These provide detailed instructions for staff on how we address and manage infectious disease outbreaks.
- Our staff is trained in infection control practices and follows established protocols based on that training. We have experience managing illness outbreaks, such as flu, and have a heightened awareness of the possible risk to our residents posed by viral illnesses, such as flu, norovirus, and COVID-19.
- We have implemented daily cleaning processes at our community that are part of the emergency plan.

WE ARE INFORMED: Because the coronavirus is spreading quickly, our administration and staff are in daily communication with the public health officials in our region to stay abreast of the latest developments about coronavirus. In addition, we are closely monitoring information from the New Jersey Department of Health as well as from federal agencies, such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CMS, and the World Health Organization.

WE ARE EDUCATING: As we learn more about coronavirus and COVID-19, the disease caused by the virus, we are educating staff, residents, and families. Current protocols we've implemented include:

- For staff: teaching them about the symptoms of COVID-19 and monitoring residents for these symptoms; teaching staff about how the virus spreads and recommended containment actions, including staying home from work if they are symptomatic.
- For everyone: because older adults can be vulnerable to the spread of viral illnesses, including coronavirus, we are asking that everyone who comes in contact with our community members to be particularly vigilant and follow recommended guidance on prevention. Specifically:
 1. Washing hands regularly and sufficiently.
 2. Cleaning and wiping down frequently touched surfaces.
 3. Limiting contact with others (social distancing).
 4. Staying at home if they are feeling ill.

WE ARE AVAILABLE: A fast-changing, potential crisis situation such as this calls for consistent communication. Our website will continue to be updated as the situation changes and as new

information is received. If you have specific questions, please contact Kate Shepard, Executive Director, or Anna Vergara, Director of Nursing, at 732-607-9230.