



July 10, 2020

Dear St. John's Residents, Tenants, and Families,

First of all, we've had an employee that works at Knutson Place that tested positive for the COVID-19 virus on July 4th, 2020. The employee had been quarantined prior to being symptomatic and prior to being tested. She has not worked at Knutson Place since June 25, so it's unlikely that the virus spread in the building. We will continue to monitor Knutson Place tenants for COVID-19 symptoms.

I was so excited for the residents and their families when the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) gave us a green light to start outdoor visits. The MDH also gave nursing homes and assisted living organizations guidelines to follow for outdoor visits. These guidelines are posted on our website and at the designated visiting area.

We've been doing outdoor visits for 3 weeks now. One of the problems that we are running into is visitors not following the MDH guidelines for outdoor visits. The purpose of the guidelines is to prevent the COVID-19 virus from getting into the building and infecting residents, tenants and staff. It's essential for all visitors to follow the guidelines.

Some of the problems we are having with outdoor visits include:

- People taking their masks off during the visit
- Visitors bringing food to the visit
- People not following the 6 foot social distancing requirement.

In order for us to continue with outdoor visits, and protect all residents, tenants and staff, we need to tighten up our visiting requirements. Effective Wednesday, July 15, the number of visitors per resident will be limited to two visitors at a time. Reservations for visits must be made 24 hours in advance of the visit. To make a reservation for a family member residing in the Woodlands or the Meadows at the Fountain Lake site, please call: 507-373-2040. To make reservations for a family member that resides at the Highway 13 nursing home, please call: 507-373-8226.

In the event that a resident or tenant tests positive for the COVID-19 virus, all outdoor visits will be suspended for at least 14 days. For example, if a resident residing at the Woodlands tests positive for the COVID-19 virus, all visits for people residing in the Woodlands will be suspended.

In the event that a visitor does not follow the MDH guidelines and removes their mask during the visit, brings food to the visit, chooses not to follow the 6 foot social distancing guideline - the visitor will not be able to make an outdoor visit for 14 days. In the event that a visitor repeatedly chooses not to follow the visiting guidelines, or in the event that multiple visitors choose to ignore the guidelines, outdoor visits will be completely suspended for the individual resident or tenant.

I understand that some families will be upset about these stricter guidelines. At the same time, we've had complaints from families that are concerned that some visitors are not following the guidelines and that their family member is subsequently being put at risk. All it takes to put an entire building at risk, and the people that live or work in that building, is one person choosing to ignore the guidelines and do their own thing. I can't stress this enough - the guidelines are meant to protect all residents, tenants and staff at St. John's. Ignoring or dismissing the CDC or MDH guidelines for whatever reason is not a risk that we can take. I would rather that we err on the side of caution.

As of July 9, 2020, there has been 1,495 deaths throughout Minnesota attributed to the COVID-19 virus. Of these deaths, 1,166 were people that reside in nursing homes, or assisted living settings. Needless to say, this statistic is alarming. Freeborn County has had a total of 309 confirmed cases of COVID-19, and very fortunately no deaths.

I know that this situation is getting old, and we all wish that this was over and behind us – but it isn't over yet. The COVID-19 virus is still spreading. I would urge all of us to be diligent about protecting Freeborn County seniors whether that person is living at home, in a nursing home, or in an apartment setting. We protect area seniors by wearing a mask when we are out in public, frequently washing our hands, or frequently using hand sanitizer, and practicing social distancing when out in public. These are very easy steps that we can take to protect Freeborn County seniors from getting the COVID-19 virus.

Thank you for your understanding and cooperation with regard to the precautions that we are taking to protect the people that live and work at St. John's. It is very much appreciated!

Sincerely,

Scot Spates  
St. John's Lutheran Community  
CEDO / Administrator