



July 23, 2020

### **Essential Caregiver Policy**

It is the policy of St. John's Lutheran Community to allow for Essential Caregiver Visits during a pandemic. Essential Caregiver Visits are allowed to meet the physical, emotional, spiritual, psychosocial needs and overall wellbeing of the residents or tenants.

This policy applies to the current COVID-19 pandemic and any other future pandemics that may occur.

### **Rationale for Essential Caregivers**

St. John's recognizes that maintaining life-long family relationships is important to the overall health and wellbeing of the residents or tenants that reside at St. John's. This policy is an attempt to help residents or tenants stay connected with family members through a designated Essential Caregiver.

Every person and every family is unique. Therefore, essential visits need to be individualized to meet the needs of the residents or tenant.

### **Designation of Essential Caregiver**

The resident or tenant is encouraged to communicate to St. John's staff the need for a designated Essential Caregiver, and their preference for who might serve as their Essential Caregiver.

A family member of a resident or tenant may initiate a request to be designated as an Essential Caregiver. Families should contact the Director of Nursing, Housing Manager, Nurse Manager or Social Worker to express interest in being designated as an Essential Caregiver.

St. John's staff will consult with the resident / tenant prior to approval of an individual as an Essential Caregiver.

When a resident or tenant requests a specific person to be designated as the Essential Caregiver, St. John's will notify this person to determine if the person is willing to serve as the Essential Caregiver. The person should consider the risks associated with being an Essential Caregiver and the potential exposure to the COVID-19 virus when deciding whether-or-not to serve in this capacity.

Only one person should be designated as an Essential Caregiver by the resident or tenant. Every person that enters one of St. John's buildings could be a potential carrier of a virus. Having multiple Essential Caregivers per resident / tenant increases the total number of people in the building which in turn provides more opportunities for the virus to get into the building and infect residents, tenants, and staff. In rare cases, exceptions to this criteria may be made by St. John's.

Designation as an Essential Caregiver will be rescinded by St. John's in the event that the Essential Caregiver does not follow basic practices recommended by the CDC and the MDH to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

Basic practices that must be followed include:

- Wearing a mask at all times during the visit
- Wearing protective eyewear during the visit
- Washing hands or using hand sanitizer prior to, during and after the visit
- Social distancing of at least 6 feet from others residents, tenants, or staff.

### **Essential Caregiver Defined**

In most circumstances the Essential Caregiver will likely be an immediate family member such as a spouse, son, daughter, sibling or grandchild.

In some cases a close friend or significant other may serve as the Essential Caregiver.

The designated Essential Caregivers should be 18 years of age or older.

The Essential Caregiver should be an individual that provided essential service, or support to the resident or tenant prior to admission to the nursing home or the assisted living setting.

In most cases, the Essential Caregiver is a person that has an intimate understanding of the resident or tenant's personal values, beliefs, personal preferences, life choices and identity.

The Essential Caregiver may be an individual who provided essential services, or support to the resident or tenant prior to the visitor restrictions that were put into place due to the pandemic.

An Essential Caregiver is a person that meets the physical, emotional, spiritual, psychosocial needs of the resident or tenant.

### **Window Visits and Outdoor Visits**

Window visits and outdoor visits are recommended for most visits. It is not the intent of this policy to allow for all family members, or all friends of a resident or tenant to be designated as an Essential Caregiver.

### **Essential Caregiver Role**

The caregiver advocates on behalf of the resident or tenant.

The caregiver communicates to St. John's staff any concerns regarding care and service, or a change in the resident's or tenant's condition.

The caregiver assists the person in managing routine tasks such as paying bills.

The caregiver provides emotional support to the resident or tenant.

The caregiver helps to assure that the resident's or tenant's personal values and wishes are taken into consideration regarding the care and services that they receive while residing at St. John's.

The caregiver may provide caregiving tasks such as assistance during meals.

The caregiver helps to preserve and promote quality of life for the resident or tenant.

The caregiver promotes a sense of continuity, identity, and autonomy for the resident or tenant.

### **Suspension of Essential Caregiver Visits**

In the event that a resident or tenant tests positive for the COVID-19 virus, all essential visits within the building where the resident or tenant resides, will be suspended for a minimum of 10 days, and until it is determined that the building is COVID free. St. John's uses CDC and MDH guidelines to determine if or when a building is likely COVID free.

In the event that a St. John's employee, Essential Caregiver, or Allied Healthcare Provider tests positive for the COVID-19 virus, Essential Caregiver visits will be suspended.

In the event that an Essential Caregiver chooses not to follow the Essential Caregiver Requirements found below, the Essential Caregiver will no longer be able to serve as the Essential Caregiver for the resident or tenant.

In the event of a spike in COVID-19 cases in Freeborn County, Essential Caregiver visits may need to be suspended.

St. John's reserves the right to suspend Essential Caregiver visits for other reasons unforeseen at this time.

### **Essential Caregiver Requirements**

Essential Caregiver visits should be made between 9am and 7:30pm.

All Essential Caregivers are required to go through training prior to starting the essential visits. Training will be provided by St. John's staff.

Essential Caregivers will be issued a name badge that must be worn at all times during the visit, including when indoors and when outdoors. The name badge is used to identify a person as an Essential Caregiver when entering the building and throughout the visit.

The caregiver must be screened for signs and symptoms of the COVID-19 virus by the receptionist before going into the Highway 13 Nursing Home, the Woodlands Nursing Home, or the Meadows Assisted Living buildings.

Handwashing must be performed at time of screening.

Caregiver visits should be limited to 1 to 3 hours per day. Resident or tenant circumstances may necessitate a longer visit.

A surgical mask must be worn at all times by the caregiver when in the building.

The resident or tenant should wear a facemask during the visit if tolerated.

Protective eyewear must be worn at all times by the Essential Caregiver when visiting the resident or tenant. Eyeglasses are not considered protective by the CDC or the MDH. St. John's will provide protective eyewear, or they can be purchased by the Essential Caregiver.

Social distancing of at least 6 feet from staff and other residents must be maintained.

Caregiver visits are limited to the resident's room or the tenant's apartment.

The resident room door or tenant's apartment door should remain open during the visit.

Caregiver visits are not allowed in any public spaces including dining rooms, living rooms, sitting areas, and activity spaces. At the Fountain Lake site the town center is public space, so visits should not take place in the Town Center spaces. The decks and patios immediately adjacent to the living space is also considered public space.

Essential Caregivers must not travel from building to building, or transport residents or tenants from building to building. For example, from the Highway 13 Nursing Home to Knutson Place, or from the Woodlands to the Meadows. An exception to this would be a person that resides in a St. John's apartment that is visiting their spouse that resides in the nursing home setting.

Caregivers are allowed to take residents or tenants outdoors and should stay on St. John's property when outdoors. While outdoors the caregiver must wear their mask. The resident or tenant should wear a mask if tolerated.

Caregivers are allowed to attend medical appointments with the resident or tenant.

Caregivers are not allowed to take residents or tenants out for car rides in the community.

The Essential Caregiver may bring food or drink – for the resident or tenant – to the visit.

Essential Caregivers with signs or symptoms of COVID-19 are strongly encouraged to be tested for the virus, and should quarantine at home for 14 days, or longer if symptoms persists.

Essential Caregivers with signs or symptoms of the COVID-19 virus should stay home and postpone their visit until COVID-19 test results are available.

This policy serves as a guideline or framework for Essential Visits. This policy does not cover all possible scenarios that may arise regarding Essential Caregiver visits.

**Questions or Concerns**

Questions or concerns regarding this policy should be addressed to the Administrator, Director of Nursing, or Social Worker.

Questions or concerns may also be directed to the Office of Ombudsman: Dave Christianson at 651-341-9797.