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July 23, 2020

Dear Residents and Family Members,

As you know, we have worked tirelessly to keep COVID-19 out of our building and are pleased that no known exposures have occurred in our resident or staff populations. However, as more and more businesses have opened throughout the state, we have seen an increase in the number of positive cases of COVID-19; we cannot deny the deadly impact this virus has on high-risk vulnerable populations like the seniors we serve.

On Tuesday July 21, in his press release, Governor Walz said:

“With an aggressive multi-pronged strategy, this battle plan is helping ensure Minnesota’s long-term care facilities are more resilient and better prepared to contain the spread of COVID-19. We’ve made progress, but there’s still more work to do. Together with our partners in congregate care settings, we must continue to take action to protect our most vulnerable Minnesotans as this pandemic continues.”

In order to accomplish the nearly mutually exclusive goals of connecting loved ones with one another while continuing to mitigating the spread of the virus, we will implement the Essential Caregiver (EC) program cautiously and in at least two phases, as follows:

- The first phase of the EC program will identify, on a case-by-case basis, those individuals who provided care to a resident prior to the visitor restrictions at the start of the pandemic and resuming this care would be beneficial for the resident and the needs are difficult for our staff to effectively deliver.
- The second phase will include individuals who could provide substantial benefit to residents who are at the highest risk of suffering significantly from the prolonged social isolation. We understand that each and every resident (and family member) would most likely benefit from these visits, however, we will try to use objective assessments.

Our current plan is to delay implementing the first phase until at least mid-August, however, the implementation date could change based on many factors including, the results of facility-wide testing, an individual positive case in our facility (resident or staff), an increase in cases in our community and/or region, difficulties experienced implementing an EC program at other facilities, and/or staffing levels at our facility. Implementing the second phase will be based on lessons learned during the first phase as well as the other factors described above.

While we recognize the importance of social distancing and physical separation to help keep residents safe from exposure to COVID-19, we also acknowledge the unintended consequences of prolonged social distancing and isolation on a resident’s overall health and well-being. We encourage you to take advantage of the other connection opportunities (technology-enabled visits, window visits, outdoor visits, and compassionate care visits) while we continue to monitor and assess safely opening our building to Essential Caregivers.

We will continue to update you as we further develop our policies and plan for the implementation of the EC program. Thank you for your support during this challenging time.

Sincerely,



Paul Abzug
President/CEO