

Facebook Covid-19 Update #41

February 19, 2021

BallouLife Communities has sadly lost another beloved resident. Our heartfelt condolences to the family. It has been devastating to our community. We continue to reel from the scourge that Covid-19 has caused in our home. We now have lost twelve residents in total. The department of health has cleared us from outbreak status as we have now had no new positive cases in the past week; our last positive case was February 11, 2021 and that was a staff person who had not been in the building prior to testing positive for over a week. We are doing our best to get back to normal life at the facility although it has drastically changed for all of us.

Our total count for residents and staff for Covid-19 remains at twenty-nine residents and forty- three staff. I pray that these numbers do not change. Our staff are returning but several still remain out. A few had returned but their stamina was lagging and they have gone back out on leave. Please pray for them to fully recover so that they can return to the job that they love and care for your loved ones.

Some good news- vaccination continues, several of the staff have now had both vaccines and others have decided to get their first vaccine. I am truly happy that more and more are deciding to get vaccinated. The initial hesitancy has been overcome especially after all that we have gone through and I hope I have been somewhat of a figurehead in getting the vaccine early and showing that it did help and that my side effects were bearable.

Next week, the residents that had received their first vaccine should receive their second dose. As for vaccination, full immunity develops seven to fourteen days after the final dose. While vaccination mitigates loss of life and greatly reduces the odds of getting very sick from Covid-19, further research is required to determine if a vaccinated person can continue to carry and spread the disease. Therefore, residents and visitors should continue to practice hand hygiene, social distancing, masking and use PPE as appropriate.

Tina continues to keep the residents on track with the holidays and special occasions. Tuesday was Mardi Gras; cute pictures on Facebook showed several imbibing drinks, smiling broadly, and cheers all around. Wednesday was Ash Wednesday and Deacon John Regan was kind enough to see to the resident's spiritual needs. He has agreed to become a regular spiritual leader for our facility when needed. We are very pleased to have his guidance.

Good news- Julie Silva, our hairdresser will be returning the beginning of March, and we are beyond thrilled to have her services back. We will also be bringing back the ancillary services of dentistry, podiatry, optical, and audiology. They had all been put on hiatus during the outbreak. All providers will be Covid-19 tested, which includes negative PCR tests and of course, the screening at the door per protocol.

As you may have heard, the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) released updated visitation guidelines that went into effect today. We are currently updating our visitation guidelines to bring back these very important visits. Of course, Tina will continue with FaceTime visits in-between the in-person visitation.

RIDOH guidance continues with:

1. Screening of all who enter the facility for signs and symptoms of Covid-19 (e.g. temperature checks, questions or observations about signs or symptoms) and denial of entry of those with signs or symptoms.
2. Face covering or mask (covering mouth, nose and chin).
 - a. Wear a mask that fits snugly but comfortably over your nose, mouth, and chin without any gaps.
 - i. Great protection: N95, KN95 or KF94 masks
 - ii. Good protection: Medical procedure (paper) mask that fits
 - iii. Ok protection: Cloth mask made of a tightly woven, breathable fabric that's at least two layers thick and fits
 - iv. BallouLife will provide the N95 mask if necessary
3. Physical distancing at least six feet between persons
4. Residents and visitors should not travel through any space designated as Covid-19 care space.
5. High touch surfaces in visitation areas are cleaned after each visit.
6. Meet all Rhode Island quarantine requirements.
7. Staff use PPE as indicated.
8. Frequent hand hygiene preferably alcohol based hand rub.
9. Two visitors maximum per resident.
10. Visits scheduled in advance.

11. NEW: BRIEF PHYSICAL CONTACT: Hand holding may be permitted if desired by both the resident and their visitor. Both the resident and the visitor must use an alcohol based hand sanitizer before and after contact. LIMIT the duration of the close contact. Embracing and hugging is allowed for BRIEF periods of time as long as both individuals are wearing masks.

We will continue with our indoor visitation as we had previously been doing. As the weather changes and gets warmer we will look to finding a place for outdoor visits to occur.

Prior to returning to visitation we would like to swab visitors on a weekly basis, just as we are swabbed. This process is done on Wednesday and Thursday between 8 am and 3 pm. I ask that you call prior to coming in, drive to the front of the building and call from your car and I will come out and swab you.

Jocelyn will be giving you a call over the weekend so that the paperwork will be ready for this to occur. If you get swabbed elsewhere and can provide the test results, you will not need to be swabbed here but again this is weekly. Rhode Island does have PCR testing available at www.portal.ri.gov, if you would prefer to have it done at another test site for your convenience. If you choose to do this, please bring the copy of the test with you, and it must be current. Think of your test result as your ticket to visitation. Also, if you would like a copy of your test results, let me know and I will provide it to you when you are here for your visit.

After having gone through what we have with the Covid-19 outbreak, we are doing our best to ensure that it does not occur again. Having said all that, visitation will start the first week of March barring any unforeseen complications. Jen and Kyla will be calling to set up the visiting schedule.

As always, wash your hands, wear a mask, socially distance, and keep your family circle small.

Respectfully Submitted,
Ruth A. Daly, RN,
Infection Preventionist