

# COVID-19 and Senior Living

## What Residents and Family Need to Know

**Coronavirus disease (COVID-19)** is an infectious disease caused by a new virus. It can lead to respiratory illness with symptoms such as a cough, fever, and shortness of breath. In a growing number of cases, it can be more severe than the flu, with a higher mortality rate. Certain populations are more at risk of getting this virus, including individuals age 60 or older and people of any age with serious underlying medical conditions.

**In an effort to reduce the spread of the virus in Senior Living Communities, the federal and state governments have:**

- Focused efforts and resources on providing resources related to infection control, PPE, testing, reporting of cases and partnering with communities to stop the spread of the virus.
- Restricted visitation of:
  - Visitors/Family members, who are only permitted in compassionate care situations, such as end of life, and only if they show no signs/symptoms of COVID-19.
  - Non-essential health care workers.
  - Long-term care ombudsmen.
- Directed communities to actively screen residents and staff for fever and signs/symptoms of COVID-19.
- Instructed communities to cancel communal dining and all group activities.

**Residents and families can stay connected in a number of ways, including:**

- Sending handwritten letters and cards.
- Using technology, such as video conferencing (Skype, FaceTime), Facebook, text message, or email.
- Making video greetings through apps such as WhatsApp and Marco Polo.
- “Visiting” through a window or glass door.

**See our Facebook and YouTube pages for other examples of how residents and families are staying connected.**

## Senior Living communities should be taking steps to prevent and control COVID-19

### Staff should:

- Wear personal protective equipment, such as facemasks and gloves, when in contact with residents, staff, guests, etc.
- Wash their hands or use hand sanitizer before and after contact with each resident, after using medical equipment, and after taking off masks, gowns, and/or gloves.
- Place alcohol-based hand sanitizer in all high traffic areas. Soap and paper towel dispensers should be placed in each apartment home.
- Practice cough etiquette/hygiene.
- Stay home when sick.
- Clean residents' hands after toileting or eating.
- Clean and disinfect medical equipment between residents and areas of the community.

### Administration should:

- Complete a review of the community's infection control plan and protections to ensure they are adequate to address COVID-19 and outline a COVID-19 Emergency Preparedness Plan.
- Continually update policies and procedures based on the latest information available.
- Communicate frequently with local and state Departments of Health, Emergency Management, and CDC to share community conditions, obtain the most up-to-date information and resources, and ask for help as needed.
- Put a plan in place for frequent communication with residents and families about community conditions and individual resident updates.

## What to do if there are concerns about the communities infection control practices or other issues

- Talk to the Executive Director about your concerns and ask what will be done to address them.
- Call the Resident Hotline at 317-564-0254
- Complete a Quick Contact Card on the Justus COVID-19 website - <http://www.justus.net/covid-19/>

## **While several changes and limitations have been temporarily put in place because of the COVID-19 crisis, residents still have the right to:**

- Receive the care and services needed to obtain their highest possible level of well-being.
- Participate in developing and implementing a person-centered plan of care that reflects personal and cultural preferences. This includes the resident's right to make decisions about their care now and in the future, such as what treatment they might want related to COVID-19.
- Be free from abuse, neglect, exploitation, and misappropriation of resident property.
- Voice grievances without discrimination or retaliation, or the fear of it, and prompt efforts by the community to resolve those grievances.
- Not be discharged or transferred except for certain reasons, to appeal the decision, and have a safe and orderly discharge/transfer if the resident leaves the community.

## **Residents and families can promote good, safe care and keep up resident morale**

### **Residents can:**

- Wash hands frequently (or ask staff to assist) or use hand sanitizer and remind other residents to do the same.
- Practice social distancing from other residents – stay 6 feet away, wear cloth masks, avoid meeting with groups, follow community visitation rules.
- Inform supervisors/administration if they observe staff who appear to be sick or not taking the steps listed above to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- Ask community staff to schedule a time for residents to communicate via technology with their family and to assist them if they need help.
- Remember that they can still use the community's Report of Concern process if they have any complaints or concerns.
- Consider ways to keep the resident council going, even if residents cannot meet in person. Perhaps residents can bring up issues by sending notes or talking by phone to the resident council president, who can then convey them to the designated staff person.
- Share ideas with Life Enrichment staff of creative ways to continue regular activities and participate in activities offered to stay mentally engaged.
- Encourage other residents, call other residents and reach out in safe ways to maintain friendships.
- Encourage staff and realize they are taking risks and have challenges too.
- Let staff know if you are feeling down or need assistance. Staff have many resources to assist you.

### Families can:

- Sign up to receive the daily email update from your community on the Justus COVID-19 website - <http://www.justus.net/covid-19/>.
- Check out the communities Facebook to see pictures of activities to help in engaging your loved one in meaningful conversation.
- Utilize the Justus COVID-19 website to find updates about how the community is handling the COVID-19 situation.
- Call the community to request the community set up a time to assist you in connecting with your loved one via technology.
- Contact the Executive Director or the Health Services Director if you have questions or concerns.
- Drop off care packages, letters, surprises at the door and staff will assist in delivering to your loved one.

**For more information on COVID, go to:**

<https://www.justus.net/covid-19/>

<https://www.coronavirus.in.gov/>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

