



November 5, 2020

Dear Residents and families,

I hope that this letter finds you and your loved ones well during these challenging days. As I am sure you are aware, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts along with the rest of the country is experiencing a resurgence of positive cases of the coronavirus. Berkshire Healthcare Systems and all of its affiliates continue to remain vigilant in our efforts to prevent and/or contain the spread of COVID-19 within each of our facilities with enhanced infection control protocols in place. The protection and safety of our residents and staff continues to be our top priority during these persistently challenging times. Please know that we understand that the emotional well-being of our residents is an important part of that equation. Our staff is wholeheartedly dedicated to balancing compassionate and nurturing care along with the socialization of residents in adherence to safety practices to prevent the spread of the virus within our facility.

Holiday Social Leave of Absence (LOA) Considerations

As we enter the holiday season, we realize there will be a heightened desire to be with your loved ones. Having said this, some residents may want to leave the building on their own or to go out with others into the community at-large, such as to family gatherings. The Centers for Disease Control, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, state officials as well as our own medical team, **are strongly recommending that residents refrain from non-essential Leaves of Absences during the upcoming weeks.** Current data indicates that social events and community-at-large gatherings are contributing to the uptick in cases and can be super spreader events. A resident that leaves our facility can increase their risk of exposure to, and contraction of, COVID-19 as well as potentially expose fellow residents upon their return.

If a resident does choose to take a social LOA for the holidays from a Berkshire Healthcare affiliate, the resident and anyone with them is always urged to wear a mask while out in the community. We also ask that you notify us in advance so that we may plan accordingly. Additionally, we recommend visiting the Mass.Gov website for additional state issued suggestions in order to remain healthy around the holidays: <https://www.mass.gov/news/thanksgiving-during-covid-19>.

Below are Berkshire Healthcare policies regarding LOAs. Upon return to an affiliate **the following must be adhered to without exception:**

- **Daytime** LOAs with a return before **9:30 PM** (curfew as mandated by Governor Baker as of November 6) will not require quarantine, but resident will be monitored for symptoms every four hours and will be tested on day 3 after return.

- **Overnight** LOAs will require that the resident quarantine in their room for 14 days (the known incubation period) and wear a mask for the duration upon return in addition to above monitoring and testing.

Please know that these policies are meant to be consistent with guidance on people exposed to COVID-19 and is a practice to protect the health of all our residents including your family member.

Continued In-Person Visitations

Inside visitations will continue to be an option **as long as we continue to have no positive cases of COVID-19 inside the facility**. The following policies continue to be in place for visitations:

- Visitations must be scheduled with, and are limited to, **TWO INDIVIDUALS/visitors** at any given time for a maximum of 30 minutes.
- Visitors will be screened for COVID-19 symptoms and have their temperature checked
- Residents, staff, and visitors must wear a mask or face covering for the duration of the visit
- The visitor must remain at least 6 feet away from the resident for most of the visit
- If desired by both parties, there may be physical contact between the resident and visitor so long as precautionary measures are followed such as hand sanitation before and after contact
- A resident who is suspected or confirmed to be infected with COVID-19 cannot participate in a visitation. A resident may be visited if: the resident has recovered from COVID-19; or the resident is currently quarantined after a recent hospital stay and is not suspected or confirmed to be infected with COVID-19, or the resident is not quarantined and has never tested positive for COVID-19.

Any out-of-state visitors from what is deemed a “high risk” state, will be required to provide written proof of a negative COVID test within 72 hours of arrival to state. A higher risk state is one where average daily case per 100K are at 10 or more AND positive test rate is above 5%, both measured as a 7-day average. You can read more at www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-travel-order.

As a continued practice, we always encourage video conferencing, window visits, and outdoor visits as weather tolerates.

We appreciate your patience, understanding and cooperation with what may seem like exhaustive policies, procedures, and restrictions. Like you, we anxiously wait for these trying times to be behind us. Thank you for entrusting the care of your loved ones with us. You have our continued commitment to the protection of their health and well-being.