



November 16, 2020

Dear Residents and Families,

I hope this letter continues to find you well. On or around November 5, a letter was sent to you regarding our planned leave of absence policy, particularly with the upcoming holidays.

Over this past weekend, Elizabeth Daake Kelley, the Director of the Bureau of Health Care Safety and Quality at the Department of Health, issued updates to that policy for long-term care facilities throughout the Commonwealth of Massachusetts during what DPH is considering a COVID-19 Emergency.

In our previous communication we differentiated reentry requirements for any residents taking a planned leave of absence (LOA) by whether they were leaving for the day or overnight. **This has changed as of November 13, 2020.**

We would like to stress again that because of ongoing community transmission of COVID-19 and concerns for the health and safety of residents, DPH recommends that residents do not participate in planned leaves of absence at this time if at all possible. If, however, a long-term care facility resident wants to schedule a non-medical planned LOA from a Berkshire Healthcare facility **for any length of time, they should plan two weeks in advance, notify the facility upon plans being made and will need to adhere to the following:**

- All should wear cloth face coverings and practice social physical distancing for the duration of the visit
- Upon return, the resident will need to be tested and quarantine in a designated space that **MAY NOT** be their room for fourteen days.
- Loved ones that the resident is visiting should limiting their interaction to the fewest number of people possible for two weeks before the resident's planned leave/visit.

PLEASE NOTE: If our facility does not have a room available for quarantine for a resident who is returning from a planned leave of absence, then loved ones may be required to keep and care for the resident until a room is available. Regardless of time spent away, once the resident returns, they will still be required to adhere to this fourteen-day quarantine.

We also ask that people take the time to educate themselves about the possible exposure risks while the resident is on their planned leave and how to mitigate them. See the following Mass.Gov website for additional state issued suggestions to remain healthy around the holidays: <https://www.mass.gov/news/thanksgiving-during-covid-19>. Thank you again for your cooperation and please be safe.