

July 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Dear Family & Friends,

Although social distancing and physical separation are still important to keep residents safe, we are taking steps to combat the unintended consequences of prolonged social isolation and to maintain overall health and wellbeing.

We are pleased to announce that we are creating a new program called Essential Caregiver -- in accordance with guidelines released from Minnesota Department of Health. Our goal through this program is to help our residents who are missing care previously provided by a loved one or outside caregiver prior to the visitor restrictions required by state and federal guidelines due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

**This new program will be implemented effective Monday, August 3rd** following MDH guidelines and is a narrowly defined exception to visitor restrictions which may allow certain cares to be provided by a personal caregiver from outside our community.

We appreciate your patience while we trial and error this program that balances the safety, health and wellness for all who live and work here and for those who serve in the Essential Caregiver role. We recognize the critical role family members and other outside caregivers, such as friends, volunteers, private personal caregivers, often have in the care and support of residents

We are providing some information to you in advance of this program starting so you have a better understanding of what it means to be an Essential Caregiver as well as the policies and protocols that will be in place for those who serve in this role.

We encourage you to **read the MDH guidance on Essential Caregivers** to fully understand the guidance we are required to follow by the State of Minnesota and ensure we are protecting the health and safety of all who live and work here. Below are some of the criteria we will use as we evaluate and designate Essential Caregivers in our settings:

- Each client will be permitted to have **ONE** Essential Caregiver at this time.
- Essential Caregivers can be family members, outside caregivers, friends or volunteers who provided regular care and emotional support to the resident prior to the pandemic.
- Essential Caregivers may provide support up to three hours per day or until caregiving tasks are completed.
- Essential Caregivers will be actively screened for symptoms of COVID-19 prior to entering the building and must wear all necessary personal protective equipment while in the building. They must also perform frequent hand hygiene and maintain social distancing of at least 6 feet with staff and other residents while in our building.
- Essential Caregivers will limit their movement in our building, providing care and support in their loved ones' room or a designated space in our building.
- Essential Caregivers must inform us if they develop a fever or symptoms consistent with COVID-19 within 14 days of a visit to a resident.

With this new guidance, we are hoping to extend the opportunity shortly to allow the designated Essential Caregiver to take a resident strictly to essential medical appointments (otherwise not out in the community) and bypass the 14 day quarantine our facility has had to oblige since the start of the COVID-10 pandemic. Future information on this potential possibility to come!

Additionally, an Essential Caregiver will not be allowed to visit a resident during a resident's 14-day quarantine and must not visit when a resident is positive for COVID-19 or symptomatic, unless the visit is for compassionate care. Please know we do retain the right to restrict or revoke Essential Care status if the designated person fails to follow our established policies and protocols.

Realizing both the potential benefits and risks of allowing additional essential caregivers into the building, we will carefully consider the current status of COVID-19 in our setting and local communities prior to designating Essential Caregivers and as we monitor the program.

If you are interested in being designating one Essential Caregiver to a client, please fill out the form here and return it to one of the Serenity Nurses. We will also require that you provide a headshot for the record and participate in one of our Essential Caregiver FAQ & Training sessions via Zoom on:

- **Tuesday, July 28<sup>th</sup> at 12:30 pm**
- **Wednesday, July 29<sup>th</sup> at 12:30 pm**

Our team needs to review each request to determine whether it meets the criteria of the state and meetings the resident's care plan before any individual can begin serving as an Essential Caregiver. Once approved and the photo and a training session are completed, a link will be given to the designated Essential Caregiver to "sign up" for slots.

Our slots while we trial this new program are limited to designated times at this time from 5 pm – 8 pm.

We know that you share our concerns about efforts to keep residents in our community safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. While we welcome this opportunity to make necessary exceptions to the visitor restrictions, we must all continue to be vigilant. If, at any time, it is deemed unsafe for Essential Caregivers to enter the building—due to a rise in the number of cases in our community, either within our walls or in the broader community—it is our obligation per MDH guidelines to revisit and reassess the program.

We recognize the concern of some of these limitations, however, we are excited for finally be making steps in a positive direction.

At this time, indoor visits in our settings are still not allowed per the Minnesota Department of Health. Please know we continue to provide outdoor visits window visits, and visits through technology and encourage you to take advantage of these opportunities.

We will keep you updated on the status of any "re-opening" guidance we receive though our Department of Health and look forward to the day when we can warmly welcome all visitors back into our community.

Sincerely,

Tim & Elaine Anderson