

May 2, 2020

Dear Residents,

We have received some follow-up questions about contact tracing and testing. With much information in the media, we understand your questions and desire for more information about our approach.

### **BACKGROUND:**

- As background, a Life Centre resident and employee, who both had spent time outside the community, exhibited symptoms of possible COVID-19 around the same time. We only share this to discourage assumptions as to the origin of the virus.
- The resident was quarantined prior to testing and was confirmed to be positive on April 23. The employee exhibited symptoms in a similar time frame as the resident, testing positive on April 22, and quarantining since symptoms first appeared.
- Upon learning of the employee having a positive test result, seven additional residents who received direct care from the employee, were tested per physicians' orders. Of these seven residents, four residents tested negative, two tested positive, and one had an inconclusive test result, and is being re-tested. In summary, we have three residents with confirmed cases. We continue to closely monitor all Life Centre residents for symptoms and will test (or retest), as needed.

### **CONTACT TRACING:**

- The Evanston Health and Human Services (HSS) Department conducts contract tracing. We are also working directly with Evanston's Communicable Disease Liaison, who is providing support and guidance to help mitigate the impact of COVID-19.
- Additionally, The Mather interviewed the employee who tested positive to verify which residents he/she provided care and if there were any employees with whom he/she was in close contact as they worked. Based on the employee interview, no employees were found to have come in close contact with the employee; residents who had close contact, were tested, as noted above.
- Going forward, should additional cases occur in any area of The Mather, a similar contact tracing protocol will be followed. Should a resident in Independent Living be confirmed as having the virus, the resident will be monitored and receive care in the most appropriate setting, whether that is quarantining in the resident's apartment, receiving care in the negative pressure isolation area, or receiving care in the hospital.

### **MASS TESTING:**

We continue to follow the guidance of the Evanston Health and Human Services Department (HSS) and the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH). All Life Plan Communities follow the guidance of these regulatory agencies; hospitals, also follow the direction of these agencies.

- As of May 1, 2020, IDPH intends on providing testing to every long-term care facility in Illinois. Based on limited resources and supplies, the state will prioritize facilities.
- **Mather had been evaluating options prior to IDPH's change in guidelines and is working to secure testing for all Life Centre employees and Life Centre residents, including residents that reside in Assisted Living, Memory Support, and Skilled Nursing.**
- The process for testing at The Mather, and decision whether to do future testing will be determined based on the outcome of our first round of testing, and guidance from an Infectious Disease expert.
- The cost of testing has not been a factor in our decision to conduct mass testing. We are focused on access to tests, the process to perform testing, protocols for retesting, and how to staff and care for residents if testing were to result in a number of team members needing to self-isolate for 14 days.
- **We are not testing the employees or residents in Independent Living currently. The decision to test in Independent Living will consider the COVID-19 positivity rate of Life Centre employees and the circumstances around the easing of restrictions for residents in Independent Living.**

#### **STRONG INFECTION CONTROL:**

As you know, we proactively implemented strong infection control/sanitation practices early on, and further increased protocols upon learning of the first positive case. Key measures to help keep residents and employee's healthy and well include:

- Health screenings and temperature checks of all employees
  - In the Life Centre: staff are screened twice per shift for temperature changes and residents are screened twice per shift for temperature, respiratory status, and oxygen levels.
- Self-monitoring of symptoms when employees are offsite
- Employees being designated to work in one area of the community (i.e., independent living or the Life Centre).
  - Wearing masks and other PPE, as recommended by federal, state, and local guidance.
- Physical distancing from others (no closer than 6 feet away for no more than 10 minutes)
  - Employees who provide direct care to residents in the Life Centre wear PPE (utilizing gowns, masks, face shields/goggles and gloves) and are following protocols for wearing and removing PPE.
- Frequent hand washing for more than 20 seconds
- Increasing the cleaning of high touch areas

**ONGOING COMMUNICATION:**

The Mather has been very proactive and transparent regarding its actions and plans relating to COVID-19 and will continue to update employees, residents, and family members. In a future communication, we will share more regarding timeframes for updating all constituents if additional cases are confirmed.

**OTHER:**

Team members greatly appreciate the outpouring of support that residents and family members have shown to the employees who are committed to working each day to keep our community safe and healthy.

Thank you and stay well.

For general questions, please call (847) 492.4651 or email [bewell@thematherevanston.com](mailto:bewell@thematherevanston.com).

Sincerely,

Deann Daniel,  
Executive Director

*PS: Please note that this letter is being shared with all resident's current emergency contacts.*