CAREAGE

*December 21st, 2020*

To our Patients, Residents and Family Members:

Those of us involved in the care and housing of seniors are acutely aware of the potential impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on our residents and their families. We wanted to assure you that we are taking every precaution we can to continue best practices within our facilities.

Careage manages and oversees the operations of the following Skilled Nursing Facilities, Assisted Living Communities and Home Health Agencies located in Washington and California:

- Careage Home Health - King, Pierce & Thurston Counties
- Mission Healthcare at Bellevue
- Mission Healthcare at Renton
- Patriots Landing
- Patriots Glen
- The Lakes at Banning

We know many of you are concerned about the spread of COVID-19 and how it may impact your loved ones at our communities. Ensuring our residents and patients are cared for in a safe and healthy environment is our greatest concern. We are working diligently to ensure our communities receive the highest quality health care services and we are taking all recommended steps to mitigate the risk of the virus spreading.

The Careage COVID-19 Team meets weekly to consult and take appropriate actions in response to what is a rapidly changing situation. We review the latest guidance from the CDC, the DOH, and other regulatory bodies. We also discuss best practices for enhancing the lives of residents, patients and staff, all the while keeping them safe. In addition, during these meetings, we collaborate on supplies such as PPE and arrange to share supplies as necessary.

Our communities are following the recommendations of the CDC on prevention, including following strict handwashing procedures, the donning and doffing of gowns, and wearing masks, face shields and gloves. We also are actively adjusting our protocols to comply with the CDC recommendations as they are updated. In addition, our communities are in close contact with the local and state health departments and are following their guidance.

**All of our communities have installed new HVAC systems** which have the technology to make our air safer. Using patented ionized hydroperoxide technology called Photohydroionization™, which was developed by RGF Environmental, our modern system uses a rare metal catalyst and a hydrating agent activated by a broad-spectrum ultraviolet light to react with ambient moisture, producing hydroperoxides which sanitize the air, killing microbes at their source.

In addition to RGF Environmental technology, the HVAC systems use the HALO-LED home purification system, a mercury and ozone-free in-duct LED air purification system that treats every cubic inch of air-conditioned space, significantly reducing both airborne and surface contaminants and pollutants.

Together, these two systems provide our patients, residents and staff with cleaner, safer air and the peace of

mind of knowing our communities are actively committed to preventing the spread and infection of the coronavirus and COVID-19.

**All of our Washington State communities have implemented Accushield** sign-in kiosks at the front entries to accommodate the latest CDC recommendations to ensure the safety, health and peace of mind of our patients, residents, staff and their families. Accushield sign-in and screening kiosks administer touchless temperature capture and COVID-19 screening questions during visitor, staff and healthcare provider sign-in to help control the health-safety of our communities. The electronic data records are kept on file for COVID contract tracing should it be necessary. The Lakes at Banning, in Banning, CA will have installed the Accushield system in late February and will inform their staff and residents upon its completion.

Based on the recommendations of the CDC and other state and local health departments, we have executed and elevated our standard protocols.

***Such steps include:***

- **On-site health care professionals** who continually monitor the current guidance to ensure the steps taken follow information received from reputable sources, including monitoring employees, contractors, residents and visitors for symptoms, and utilizing potential action plans if symptoms should present themselves.

- **Education and training** on infection control provided regularly to all employees and residents, including re-educating our teams and our residents and/or patients of existing infection control protocols – and how they should be observing it;

- **Connection** to national, state, and county and local health departments to remain informed;

- **Responsive measures** to quickly intervene should anyone with symptoms need support.

- **Preventative measures** to control access to our communities. Signage is displayed at community entrances, and all essential third parties and staff are monitored before entering, and anyone unable to satisfy our strict protocols is not allowed to enter.

- **Outside Visitation is permitted.** Patriots Landing, Patriots Glen and The Lakes at Banning provide outdoor visiting stations for families to safely visit their loved ones. Contact your appropriate community to reserve the visitor's station for your special visit.

- **However, Visitors** are not allowed in any of our communities at this time. This does not apply to end-of-life situations. We do allow compassionate care visits, although visitors are required to follow strict protocols.

- **Employees** must be screened for COVID-19 symptoms before entering our communities at the start of each shift, this includes temperature screening and questions about possible symptoms and travel.

- **Any patients and/or residents** who test positive for COVID-19, will be quarantined for a period defined by CDC guidelines.

- **Vaccinations,** our community has first priority access to COVID-19 vaccines provided by Consonus Pharmacy, which will be administered to all Assisted Living and Memory Care residents and staff members as soon as the vaccines are available. Independent Living residents are not candidates for the vaccination at this time.

To follow CDC Vaccination updates and publications, visit the CDC | Vaccine website.
Current guidelines are as follows: Healthcare Personnel and Long-term Care Facility Residents

### What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

People with COVID-19 have had a wide range of symptoms reported – ranging from mild symptoms to severe illness. Symptoms may appear **2-14 days after exposure to the virus**. People with these symptoms may have COVID-19:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

Please see the Center of Disease Control (CDC) Website to cover Symptoms of Coronavirus,
As well as how to Stop the Spread of Germs.

**You may be asking how you can help aid us, in minimizing the spread of any illness.**
**Here are some requests we would make of you:**

- Wash your hands frequently and use good hygiene behaviors;
- Maintain social distancing – 6 feet distance between yourself and anyone who is coughing or sneezing;
- Use a tissue or your bent elbow for a cough or sneeze. Then dispose of the tissue and wash your hands immediately;
- If you have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing, please isolate yourself from others and notify our team immediately or seek medical care;
- If you have been exposed to someone with fever, cough and difficulty breathing, please isolate yourself from others and notify our team immediately;
- Encourage your friends and loved ones to connect with you virtually over Skype, Facebook, Google Duo, etc.

## How to Communicate with your loved one(s):

We understand that connecting with family members is incredibly important, and there are a variety of ways to connect with them. These include telephone, email, text, or video calls through Skype, Google or Facebook. We provide video calling stations and/or help your loved one utilize their own personal technology in order to connect with you.

TO CONSIDER: Do we want to talk about the outside visitor stations in this area of the letter?

***We thank you for your assistance, support and understanding of the policies and procedures we are enforcing to keep your loved ones safe in this evolving situation.***

If a positive COVID-19 case does occur at one of our locations, the facility management team will notify all interested parties directly.

For additional information, please visit the CDC's coronavirus disease information page.

Sincerely,

David Feeney
Chief Executive Officer
Careage

Gidgette Chesley
Executive Director / Administrator
Patriots Landing

Sheryl Baker
Director of Nursing / Infection Control
Patriots Landing

December 2, 2020

Governor Jay Inslee
Office of the Governor

John Wiesman, DrPH, MPH, Secretary of Health
Department of Health
secretary@doh.wa.gov

Kathy Lofy, MD, State Health Officer
Department of Health
kathy.lofy@doh.wa.gov

Bill Moss, Assistant Secretary
Aging and Long-Term Support Administration
bill.moss@dshs.wa.gov

Greetings:

Thank you for your continued leadership as we navigate through the evolving COVID-19 pandemic. On behalf of LeadingAge Washington, the Washington Health Care Association, the Adult Family Home Council, and the Long Term Care Ombudsman, we are writing today regarding the distribution and prioritization of a COVID-19 vaccine. As you know, Pfizer and Moderna have both applied for FDA emergency use authorization for a coronavirus vaccine and it is likely that vaccine distribution will begin by the end of this year.

Residents and staff in long term care and across all senior living settings must be the number one priority for the first round of COVID-19 vaccinations. Those in skilled nursing, assisted living, and independent living settings affiliated with assisted living or skilled nursing and rehabilitation centers, as well as adult family homes and affordable senior housing campuses, must also be prioritized along with the rest of the health care sector. Ensuring that those who live and work in long term care and senior living are among the first to receive a COVID-19 vaccine will help limit the spread of this deadly virus and prevent further tragedies.

We also want to ensure that residents are able to get out to enjoy social activities and see their loved ones again. We are cautiously optimistic about the plans to distribute and administer the vaccine quickly to long term care and senior living populations. We deeply appreciate the federal government, states, CVS, Walgreens, and other long term care pharmacies for partnering together to prioritize the distribution of an imminent vaccine to our most vulnerable population.

Because states are in charge of vaccine distribution to staff, we again strongly urge Washington public health officials to make long term care caregivers and nurses the highest priority among healthcare workers for the vaccine. Prior to the pandemic, the long term care workforce was already stretched thin with few caregivers and nurses to hire and a limited ability to financially compete with hospitals and other clinical settings when hiring nurses and CNAs. As virus outbreaks occur in long term care, nurses, CNAs, and other caregivers are taken off shift in large numbers when testing positive or symptomatic and in quarantine. When this happens, long term care settings are unable to safely manage the care needs of the

resident population and residents must be temporarily transferred to other settings. The burden placed on staffing is enormous; hiring agency staff is not always an option and the cost is astronomical. Our state has moved quickly to stand up rapid response teams to provide staffing support during times of crisis. Vaccine distribution must be prioritized and quickly made available to long term care direct care staff to ensure continuity in care delivery to all residents entrusted to our care.

While other industries may begin to open with new restrictions, long term care facilities will not be able to return to normal until there is a vaccine. The highly contagious nature of the virus in congregate settings opens the door for rapid spread. The lack of prioritization for long term care and senior housing at the outset of the pandemic led to devastating losses, and we cannot let that happen again. Vulnerable older adults and the frontline workers who protect them deserve the full support of the public health sector.

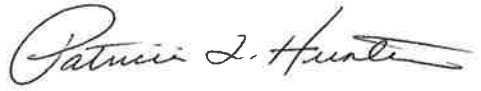
Current data shows that while COVID-19 cases in all long term care facilities account for 6 percent of total cases statewide, they account for 53 percent of all COVID-19 related deaths—because people in our sector by definition have multiple pre-existing conditions and are older, making them more vulnerable to COVID-19. According to CDC data, the risk of mortality in this age group is 630 times higher than those 18-29 years old. With tens of thousands residing in and working in Washington's long term care facilities and senior housing, providers stand ready to help facilitate this monumental endeavor. We look forward to our continued work together to protect our most vulnerable populations quickly and effectively.

Sincerely,

Deb Murphy, MPA, JD
Chief Executive Officer
LeadingAge Washington

Robin Dale, JD
Chief Executive Officer
Washington Health Care Association

John Ficker
Executive Director
Adult Family Home Council



Patricia Hunter
WA State Long-Term Care Ombudsman

cc Amber Leaders, Senior Policy Advisor