

July 24, 2020

Dear Resident, Family and Staff,

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. **This new program will be implemented effective August 3rd** per MDH guidelines. We ask for patience in the days ahead as we design a program that balances the safety, health and wellness for all who live and work here, as well as, those who serve in the Essential Caregiver role. We are providing some information to you 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 <https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hcp/ltccaregiver.pdf> to fully understand the guidance we are required to follow by the State of Minnesota. Below are some of the criteria we will use as we evaluate and designate Essential Caregivers in our settings:

- Essential Caregivers will be determined based on resident assessment and consultation with the BLHCC Staff. Generally these are people deemed to have provided an essential service to a resident prior to COVID-19.
- Residents will be consulted about their wishes to help determine whom to designate as an Essential Caregiver.
- Essential Caregivers will be actively screened for symptoms of COVID-19 prior to entering the building and must wear all necessary personal protective equipment (face mask and eye protection) 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.
- If at any time the Essential Caregiver is not following the guidelines, the facility has the right to end the visit.

With this new guidance, it is important to know that Essential Caregivers cannot visit a resident during a resident's 14-day quarantine and must not visit when a resident is positive for COVID-19 or symptomatic.

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 will be in contact with you if your loved one has met the criteria previously described to allow for an essential caregiver visit. We want nothing more than to welcome visitors back in our building but at this time, we remain closed to indoor visits. We continue to provide outdoor visits, window visits and visits through Zoom and Facetime. We encourage you to take advantage of these opportunities. Thank you for your continued support as we strive to keep everyone safe.

If you have any questions or concerns please reach out to us at 320-833-5364.

Sincerely,

Mark Rust, Administrator

Kendra Hiles, Director of Nursing