

March 12, 2020

To Whom it May Concern,

Due to the latest update, from The Vermont Department of Health, Brownway Residence has made the decision to prohibit visitors unless medically necessary. In the letter, dated March 8th, I explained that we were prepared to increase safety measures to ensure the health of our vulnerable population and the staff that are supporting them - we feel strongly that it is time for us to do so. Effective at 2pm today, our visitor policy has changed to reflect the following:

* Only medical personnel or medically necessary visitors are permitted to enter the facility.
  + Exceptions will be made to families of those residents that are receiving care under the hospice program, are nearing end of life and require family support – arrangements and instructions will be coordinated ahead of time to ensure the safety of all residents and staff and to limit unnecessary exposure during the visit.
  + All medical personnel or medically necessary visitors will continue to be required to complete the questionnaire, sanitize and ring the door bell to be allowed into the building by staff.
* Vendors have been updated on how they are expected to deliver supplies - all deliveries will be coordinated in advance and will be received through the basement, rather than the front door, to ensure safety of all residents.
  + All vendors will continue to be required to complete the questionnaire, sanitize and ring the door bell to be allowed into the building, or assisted, by staff.
* In order to further limit exposure, residents will not be attending group events or spending time in the community until further notice. This will mainly impact:
  + Residents receiving community outings/supports through a waiver program
  + Residents who, independently, leave the facility daily to go into town for shopping/socialization
* Family can send gift cards for their loved ones if they don’t have a petty cash account at the facility – we will be coordinating trips twice per week to the dollar store, gas stations and Hannaford to obtain items normally purchased by family or residents so that residents are not without items they’ve grown accustomed to having.
* Medically necessary appointments will continue and Brownway will coordinate with the various medical offices and facilities so that we are clear on their policy and procedures related to COVID-19 prior to bringing residents for their appointments.
  + Any appointments that are not medically necessary will be rescheduled - you will receive verbal notification if any appointments are rescheduled for your loved one.
* The hair salon will not be operating during this time – all scheduled hair appointments have been cancelled until the visitor restriction has been lifted.

As I am sure you can understand, this is a very unsettling time for most of our residents and it is important that they, as well as us, continue to be supported by all of you. You are an integral part of our “family”, our facility and our day to day operations - we rely heavily on you for guidance so that we can provide the highest levels of support that we can to your loved one. During times of duress, it is often the family and friends that we seek assistance from first. You are the security that they all wish to have right now and I understand how distressing this must feel to have it “taken” from them. We have purchased an extra iPad so that we can begin arranging digital visits via Facetime or Skype and we feel it is important for these “visits” to happen as often as possible. I am working on a schedule so that all residents can spend some time “seeing” you and I am hoping to get a link out to all family sometime this weekend to start scheduling calls. In the meantime, I would encourage everyone to call their loved one and reassure them that you’re involved in what’s going on, that you’re glad they’re staying safe and that you’re available to them anytime via phone.

We will continue to be cuing all residents, staff and visitors to engage in excellent hand hygiene practices while inside the facility as we know that hand hygiene is the most important step taken to limit the spread of germs or infection. Our best defense, right now, is avoiding exposure and we are confident that we can continue to do that. We have secured multiple cases of sanitizer, wipes, toilet paper, paper towels, hand soap and necessary cleaning supplies through our vendor for immediate delivery and we anticipate having no interruption in our supplies going forward. We have secured “first call” status with our vendor due to the nature of our business and vulnerability of our population – if that fails, The Department of Health has an inventory of supplies and they are prepared to step in and temporarily replenish our supplies until more are available to us.

I have been in contact with our local health center, local home health agency, local social workers and our local hospital to ensure that necessary supports are available should we need them. At present, we have the following supports in place and/or being coordinated:

* Residents with Notch providers will receive home visits to limit unnecessary exposure in the office/community setting. This is currently true for all Enosburg Health Center patients and I am trying to secure this for all Saint Albans, Swanton and Richford Notch patients as well.
* Franklin County Home Health is drafting a contract with Brownway for “staff sharing” in the event of an urgent situation involving staffing ratios and/or the need for increased nursing support due to illness.
* I have requested support from local clinicians in further supporting the residents cope with this significant change by discussing their fears/concerns out loud together. My goal is to have mental health professionals onsite with me during this meeting so that I can be sure that all resident concerns are being validated and addressed in real time while offering a resource to provide ongoing support to any resident who might be struggling going forward.

If you, yourself, have been exposed to COVID-19 and/or have concerns about a potential exposure involving a current resident at our facility, it must be reported immediately so that we can take the appropriate measures to prevent further exposure.

Should you have any questions or concerns or need to report information, you are encouraged to reach out via phone or email. If you have suggestions, think we might have missed/not considered something, you are encouraged to reach out. Lastly, if there are ways that you feel you can support our residents/facility during this time, please do not hesitate to reach out via phone or email.

Be well,

Morgan A. Ouellette, LPN

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