

Date: December 14, 2020  
To: Residents, Families, and Friends  
From: Gustave (Gus) Keach-Longo, President/CEO

RE: **COVID-19 Update**

### Stay 1 “GUS” Apart

Remember, COVID-19 cases are on the rise all around us.

Remember to:

- Mask Up Tower Lane
- Keep your hands clean—use sanitizer frequently
- Stay 1 “GUS” apart (6 feet)



### Vaccine for COVID-19

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved the first vaccine as of December 11<sup>th</sup>. Connecticut should receive the delivery of the vaccine today or tomorrow.

The Towers is still considered to be among the first priority group which includes healthcare workers, residents of nursing homes, and individuals who care for residents of nursing homes and assisted livings. Based on my understanding, all individuals residing at The Towers or working within The Towers (including volunteers) are eligible to receive the vaccine at The Towers.

We continue to receive information from Walgreens, our vaccine partner, and anticipate working with their coordinator to develop our vaccine plan soon. I'll keep you in the loops, folks! Just know that my best guess is that our turn will be in the middle of January.

We will be using the Pfizer vaccine, which is the one chosen by the CT Department of Public Health. This vaccine is not a live virus. There is no chance of contracting the virus from the vaccine shot. This is an “mRNA” type vaccine as it uses genetic coding instead of live virus. This vaccine requires two shots, approximately 20 days apart. So, we will be planning multiple days for the initial and follow up shots.

This weekend the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) held a webinar to prepare communities for the vaccine rollout. I learned that the vaccine begins to work 1-2 weeks after the second shot. So, it is important that both shots are taken and that the same brand of vaccine is used for both shots (e.g. both Pfizer vaccines). There is no information for the effects of having the first shot be one vaccine and the second be

a different one. So, if you get the vaccine at The Towers, plan to take the second shot also at The Towers so you know you are receiving the same vaccine. We also have no way to know how long the vaccine's effectiveness will last. It may be necessary for us to repeat the vaccinations at some point in the future.

Once vaccinated, the chance of contracting the virus is significantly lowered. However, there are a few key concerns:

- How long will the vaccine remain effective is unknown
- A small percentage of people (approximately 5%) may still contract the virus
- If the virus is contracted by a vaccinated person, it is still not known how severe the signs/symptoms may be
- It is not known if a vaccinated person could be considered contagious to others—even when not personally infected

The CDC recommends that people who have had COVID-19 should still get the vaccine. Though there is only about a 90 day period when a person is not likely to contract a second case. Therefore, it is important that even people who have recovered from COVID-19 receive the vaccine. It does not matter if a person's COVID case was symptomatic or asymptomatic.

If a person has experienced a recent "significant exposure" to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 and is quarantining, the person should wait until after the 14 day quarantine period is complete to receive the first shot.

Due to the state of emergency, informed consent to give the shot is not legally required. However, we will follow Walgreens paperwork and provide the suggested information sheet created by the CDC. So, there will be some paperwork that each resident or responsible party will be requested to complete and sign. As we know more, we will share more.

### **I'm taking the shots for you, will you take them for me?**

Between now and the time that we can offer the vaccine, I would like each of you to seriously consider taking the shots. I understand that there is a concern about vaccines in our country, and I respect the concerns people have regarding taking any injection. However, if there ever is a time to consider taking a vaccine, this is it. I am not an infection control specialist, but I have seen what this virus can do to people in communities like ours. The risk of not taking the vaccine is too great to ignore. I plan to take the vaccine. Just like our former US Presidents, Bill Clinton, George Bush and Barack Obama, I too am happy to take the shot on camera if that will make a difference in your decision. So, please—think about it. You are welcome to leave me your thoughts by dropping notes in "Notes to Gus" boxes or calling and leaving me a voice message. I'm taking the shots for you, will you take them for me?

## **“Flattening the Holiday “Curve” – Preventing the Spread**

Even as our protocols seem to be helping us avoid the worst of this pandemic, we are well aware of the increasing risk we face as the number of cases in the wider community soar. The virus is entering The Towers several times each week at this point.

With several holidays at the end of this month, the risk of the virus taking hold within our building is anticipated to be even greater. Even though we believe that our team members and all those wonderful caregivers who so lovingly support our residents, will use their best judgment for keeping safe, we are aware that the temptation for gathering with family is much too great during the upcoming holidays. As such, we reasonably anticipate that New Haven will likely experience an even greater surge of the virus than we are now facing due to gatherings at Thanksgiving.

For several months throughout this summer and fall, The Towers experienced 1 new positive COVID case on average every other week. Since the second week of November, The Towers’ COVID-19 testing has experienced 37 positive. We are averaging greater than 7 each week—and it seems to be increasing.

These new cases are almost exclusively individuals who come into The Towers to provide support services to our residents. Through these contacts we have had 13 residents have significant exposures. Thankfully, only 2 residents have become positive as a result. We continue to have zero community spread at The Towers and our efforts are working as best as possible. However, we are now planning how we will remain safe during the post-holiday period.

### **The Towers Photo**

The photo above was sent to me by one of our Board Members. She took it last week and it has become one of my new favorite pictures. So I thought I would share it. Thank you Ina!



## **Suspension of In-Person Programs Effective December 28th**

On December 28<sup>th</sup> at 8:00am, The Towers will suspend all in-person programs and reinstate our Visitor Ban for approximately 3 full weeks. This will be in an effort to proactively “flatten the holiday curve” and prevent the potential spread of the virus due to the holidays. This means that all in-person gatherings planned by Dean and/or Sarah will be canceled. Unfortunately, this must include all in-person religious services and programs run by our dedicated volunteers.

In anticipation of this, Dean is planning more programs to be aired via Towers TV and setting up groups to meet remotely through electronic connections. Groups being held now will be converted to Zoom or telephone.

Informal groups that bring their own chairs and gather in our common spaces will be directed to not gather during this time. I truly understand how this will be difficult on some of our more social residents, but I am hoping that this hard step will be respected and followed for everyone’s health.

## **New Visitor Ban Effective December 28th**

The Visitor Ban will also be in effect during these 3 weeks in an effort to reduce the number of people entering The Towers. I know that having to go back to restricting visitors from our building is difficult. My hope is that this is only temporary while we face the worst of the virus.

On, or about, January 18<sup>th</sup>, we will likely lift the Visitor Ban and start to schedule small group gatherings again if we see the number of new COVID cases decline. Our key goal in implementing this new plan is to avoid a potential surge of cases entering The Towers. Our protocols are continuing to serve us well, but they are not enough to prevent significant exposures when there are so many positive cases in our area.

**Staying Strong,  
Staying Safe,  
Staying Connected! - Gus**

