

Date: August 17, 2021  
To: Residents, Families, and Friends  
From: Gustave (Gus) Keach-Longo, President/CEO

RE: **COVID-19 Update**

### **What We Have Learned**

Last week we attended several meetings regarding the changes from the original COVID-19 virus to the newer Delta variant. Our meetings included the CT Department of Public Health (DPH), an Epidemiologist expert at Yale and our prior COVID-19 testing partner, Murphy Medical Associates.

As we all have heard through the media, the COVID-19 Delta variant is much more contagious than the original COVID-19 virus. The original virus tended to spread to from 1 person to 2 people during exposure. The Delta variant infects approximately 6.5 people. This data is based on situations where no one wears a mask and all involved are unvaccinated.

It only takes a particle or two of the Delta virus to expose a body to the virus. Therefore, we are adjusting our protocols in ways that we think will reduce the risk.

### **New COVID Protocols**

Masks are mandated by the State of CT while indoors at The Towers. We are re-implementing our stay 6 feet apart, also known as 1 “GUS,” while indoors.

While outdoors, masks may be taken off and we ask that you stay 3 feet apart (i.e. a “half-GUS”).

### **Entering The Towers as of September 1<sup>st</sup>**

We are adjusting our protocol for entering The Towers **effective September 1<sup>st</sup>**.

Our hybrid protocol will remain in place. To enter our building, every person must show either a vaccination card prior to entering or a negative COVID test.

However, starting September 1<sup>st</sup>, COVID tests must be administered **within the prior 7 days NOT 10 days**, which we have previously mandated. This is to better match DPHs’ requirements and to reduce the chance that someone’s test is administered too far in advance of his/her visit. There were recommendations for us to reduce the requirement to 3 days (72 hours), but we understand that for many of our caregivers, this is not possible. For now, we are implementing 7 days prior to entering The Towers.

## **COVID-19 Vaccine Booster**

Information on booster shots seems to keep evolving. There is a significant push from the media to offer the shots and there is some research from Israel (which has done an excellent job of vaccinating the population) that boosters may be helpful to avoid break through cases. At this time we have no set timeframe for offering booster shots at The Towers. If you are immunocompromised, we suggest you speak with your physician to see if you may be eligible for the booster shot over the next few weeks.

Once boosters are recommended and made available to the public (we believe the first group will be older adults), we will organize a new vaccine clinic at The Towers. We have already connected with Walgreens so that we are on their list. Once we hear more, we will let you know. For now, no booster shots are available to us.

## **Carnival Postponed**

In my last memo, I mentioned we would be making a decision about the carnival. Based on the information we gathered throughout last week, we are making the decision to postpone our carnival until next year. We simply could not take the risk that one of our residents, team members or community members could contract the virus at our event. Our Carnival Task Force has saved all their plans and will make sure that next years' carnival will be bigger and better (and wetter). We appreciate everyone's understanding and look forward to seeing our community come together when it is safer to do so. I am told that next year I may have to spend even more time in the dunk tank!

## **Dining Services**

All indoor dining is canceled until further notice. We are still gathering information on this and trying to determine the level of risk indoor dining may be for our residents. We will be meeting as a team in the next week to brainstorm possible scenarios to use some of our outdoor spaces to serve meals outside. Please look for updates in a future memo.

## **Salon Services**

We recently had an exposure within our salon. Thankfully, all individuals were vaccinated. We followed our protocols by requesting that all affected persons remain quarantined in their apartments. All were tested and, thankfully, were negative. We believe that our precautions were well followed and since all residents were vaccinated, we were fortunate to have no community spread.

At this time, we intend to keep the salon open, as we believe that those services are important for the health of our residents and that our current protocols seem to be working well. There may be a time when we have to close the salon, but for now our intention is to keep it open for our residents.

## **Programs/Gatherings within The Towers**

For now, our intention is to keep our indoor programs running so that residents may continue to remain active. It is reasonably safe for us to offer programs while everyone remains masked and social distanced of one “GUS.” We also intend to keep the furniture available on the ground floor—though 6 feet apart.

## **Unvaccinated Residents**

There are many vaccinated residents who feel that unvaccinated residents should not be allowed to join programs and unvaccinated individuals (no matter who they are) should not be allowed to enter The Towers. Though I respect those feelings and understand the concern, we cannot restrict unvaccinated people. For almost all, the reason for their unvaccinated status is due to other health difficulties. We cannot restrict unvaccinated individuals per guidance from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and advice from our legal counsel.

My friends, this is less of a concern than you may think. Though this is not perfect information, I do believe that many of the folks who are unvaccinated tend to remain in their apartments due to their own health reasons and/or to protect themselves. At this time, we know that vaccinated people may be carriers of the virus and be fully unaware. So, if we all practice our protocols by wearing masks indoors and staying one “GUS” apart, the risks are very low.

## **Visitors**

At this time, visitors are welcome at The Towers. However, due to the increased potential of visitors having been exposed to the virus prior to entering The Towers, we strongly expect all visitors to diligently keep their masks on, including even while visiting our residents in their apartments.

## **Visitors from Areas with High Infections Rates**

Though there are no formal travel bans currently in effect, we are concerned that individuals who travel from areas with high infection rates (e.g. FL, TX, etc.) may have a higher likelihood of exposure. Therefore, we request that if you have traveled from these locations, please do not visit The Towers as soon as you arrive in Connecticut. Please refrain from entering The Towers for one week and receive a PCR COVID test (long swab) within 3 days of your visit.

## **REMEMBER—If You Feel Sick**

If you feel the signs/symptoms of the virus (e.g. fever, persistent cough, extreme fatigue, sore throat), please remain in your apartment and contact your Resident Services Coordinator. It is important that you let us know so that we may have you tested for the virus and conduct contact tracing. It is also critical that you let us know if you may be sick so that we can do our best to help you as needed, and avoid others being infected.

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