

## FOREST HILL HEALTHCARE CENTER

# **Pandemic/Epidemic Communications Plan for Residents & Families**

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### **Policy Statement**

Forest Hill Healthcare Center has established a resident and family communication plan to address the communication needs that may arise during a pandemic/epidemic event. In the event of a pandemic/epidemic, normal communication channels may be interrupted due to the increase need of communication with staff, physicians, government agencies, other providers, and the constant change in situations and available information. The center's pandemic/epidemic communication plan for residents and families provides for the timely and consistent dissemination of information along several different platforms. During a pandemic/epidemic event, communication with residents and families helps relieve stress and allows the residents and families to remain informed and up to date with the center's response to the situation.

### **Policy Interpretation and Implementation**

1. The facility shall communicate with the residents and family members during a pandemic/epidemic event. The facility shall provide information to residents and family members as part of the planning phase and response phase including mitigating actions to prevent or reduce the risk of transmission such as possible visitor restrictions, visitor preventive safety measures, and contact information for administrative staff. Residents and family members will be notified in the event that residents and/or staff contract the infection. The center shall employ several different forms of communication including daily or weekly staff telephone calls to residents' family members, email notifications, letters to residents and families, and postings throughout the center. The center shall take the necessary steps to update and verify resident contact information, and encourage family members to communicate with the center as often as needed. The identity and personal health information of infected residents and/or staff shall be protected by the facility.
2. During a pandemic/epidemic event, the center shall provide cumulative updates for residents, their representatives, and families on a weekly basis. Updates shall include information pertaining to the number of infected residents and staff, the number of deaths of each, the number of recovered residents and staff, any testing results, and any additional information related to the outbreak.
3. In addition to the above, the center shall notify residents and their representatives by 5:00pm of the following calendar day of any new confirmed infection, or whenever three or more residents or staff are suspected to be infected with a contagious illness within 72 hours of each other. Communication may be in the form of telephone calls or email.
4. The center shall provide alternative communication methods for residents and families such as virtual communications (telephone conferencing, video communications,) when in-person visits may be prohibited or restricted. Staff shall be assigned to groups of individual residents and act as the primary contact for the center and shall coordinate virtual visits for residents and families.
5. During a pandemic/epidemic event, the center shall assign staff members to call family members at least weekly with updates on the individual resident's status and answer any concerns that the family member may have. Calls will be scheduled at the same time to ensure that family members are available for the calls. Calls may be more frequent depending upon the situation and/or at the request of the family member.
6. The center shall update its website weekly to share pertinent information with the residents' families and to provide information on the residents' environment such as meal menus and recreation events.