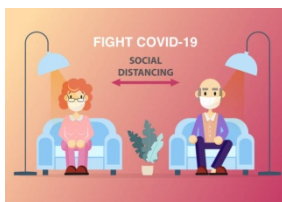


Dear Resident, Family Members and Friends,

This weekly newsletter continues to be sent to responsible parties listed as the primary contact for residents of the Baldwin Care Center. If responsible parties could share this information with other family members or direct them to the Baldwin Care Center website at www.baldwincarecenter.com, that would be great. The current and prior newsletters are posted there. Birch Haven Assisted Living is also sending the weekly newsletter to responsible parties. The Birchwood Apartment Manager makes copies available to all of the tenants there. I hope you continue to find this information useful. If there is a topic that you would like discussed please let me know and I will include it. If you have questions about the content of the newsletter, please feel free to contact me via email at elafavor@baldwincarecenter.com or by phone at 715-684-3231, Ext. 103.



At the end of last week, both CMS (Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services and Wisconsin DHS (Department of Health Services) both released memos regarding visitation. While previous CMS guidance has focused on protecting nursing home residents from COVID-19, they recognize that physical separation from family has taken a physical and emotional toll on residents. CMS indicates and outlines that the core principles of COVID-19 infection prevention must be followed during any type of visit to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission. These core principles are consistent with the CDC guidance for nursing homes and must be adhered to at all times. CMS indicated that any visitor who is unable to adhere to these principles will be asked to leave and will not be permitted to visit. CMS outlined the following type of visits:

1. Outdoor Visitation – Outdoor visitation is preferred. Outdoor visits pose a lower risk of transmission due to increased space and airflow. Visits should be held outdoors whenever practicable. The Baldwin Care Center Campus has been conducting safe outdoor visits since July.
2. Indoor Visitation – Facilities can accommodate indoor visits based on the following guidelines. A) There has been no new onset of COVID-19 cases in the last 14 days and the facility is not conducting outbreak testing; B) Visitors should adhere to the core principles and staff should provide monitoring to make certain core principles are followed; C) Facilities should limit the number of visitors per resident at one time. Facilities should schedule visits for a specified length of time; D) Facilities should limit movement in the facility. Visitors should go directly to the designated visiting area. Facilities should use the COVID-19 county positivity rate to determine how to facilitate indoor visitation. If the positivity rate for the county is at a low (10%) visitation should only occur for compassionate care (end-of-life type situations). Baldwin Care Center is working on developing an indoor visitation policy.
3. Compassionate Care Visits – While end-of-life situations have generally been used as an example of a compassionate care visit, other situations may be deemed compassionate care visits, such as a resident who is experiencing weight loss or dehydration and needs cueing and encouragement from a family member to eat and drink. Facilities have some limited flexibility to determine if a situation meets the compassionate care definition.
4. Essential Visitor – CMS does not distinguish between an “Essential Visitor” (EV) or “Essential Caregiver” as some states have. The State of Wisconsin released some guidance for EVs at the end of last week. Wisconsin DHS indicated that nursing facilities may develop a process to designate certain individuals as Essential Visitors. An EV could be a family member or someone that the resident was previously actively engaged with in a care giving or supportive role that provided services or emotional support. DHS indicated that the policies should be developed with input from the Medical Director. Nursing facilities are not required to develop an EV program. At this time the Medical Director and I do not feel that we need to put an Essential Visitor policy in place. We will

continue to manage resident visits with the policies and processes we have in place for Compassionate Care and Outdoor Visitation. We feel that the Essential Visitor poses a significant risk for bringing COVID-19 into the building because the visits would not be supervised and because of the increased positivity rate in the county. Just prior to this newsletter being sent, Wisconsin DHS rescinded the Essential Visitor guideline. Facilities were told to follow the CMS guidance on visitation. As I have mentioned in the past, guidance changes so rapidly, it is difficult to keep up. Dependent upon the situation regarding the necessity for visitation, the facility will address situations on a case-by-case basis so that needed and necessary visits would be accommodated.



Again, this week testing for COVID-19 continues to remain an important topic of discussion. This past week an updated positivity rate was released for all of the counties in Wisconsin. The updated positivity rate indicates that St. Croix County is still at a Medium level, which is a positivity rate of between 5-10%. This level means that facilities must test employees weekly.

Baldwin Care Center did receive the rapid antigen tests from the federal government. As soon as we received the testing kits and supplies last week we began routine testing for employees to be compliant with the CMS requirement for weekly testing. This type of test includes use of a nasal swab. The nasal swab is then placed in a solution and tested in a device. This device then indicates whether the test result is positive or negative. All Baldwin Care Center employees tested negative. The next challenge will be testing for this week. Baldwin Care Center was assigned a laboratory to work with. We have been assigned to Accelerated Laboratories of Wauwatosa, WI. The facility completed the account set up information which included gathering and submitting specific information on each employee. In order to receive COVID-19 tests, the facility first has to order tests through the State of Wisconsin. The State of Wisconsin then has to approve the request before the lab can begin working with the facility. As of earlier in the week, the lab had not received approval from the State that the Baldwin Care Center could have tests shipped to us. If the facility does not receive the tests this week, we will not be compliant with the weekly testing requirement. If we do not have the tests, we cannot perform the tests. If this is the case, I will continue to document this fact and present it to regulators in case there is a question as to our compliance. The State is only able to provide tests bi-weekly for all the facilities in Wisconsin. Facilities will be responsible for purchasing the rapid antigen tests to use every other week. This may become a financial burden, in addition to the burden it has created on human resources. The testing process is quite labor intensive and should be completed by trained nursing staff. Unfortunately, this takes time away from direct resident care. This week the Wisconsin DHS, Bureau of Assisted Living indicated that the federal government will be sending a rapid test to be used. We are waiting for clarification regarding the use of these tests. I would anticipate that until we are at a point that an effective vaccine is available, we will continue with regular testing and limited visitation. As always, we will keep you updated regarding changes.

*Eileen LaFavor,
Administrator*

