

PRESS RELEASE

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A New Day at Pond Home

The days have taken on a surreal cadence here, there and everywhere...and for those of us in the long-term residential care industry, this “new normal” may have changed the way we conduct everyday business, but it has not altered the care and compassion that has and always will be the hallmark of Pond Home and the many other elder housing and assisted living communities in the Commonwealth and country.

To put things into perspective, the history of Pond Home dates back more than 120 years – a century and two decades of caring for our residents through many national and local events and challenges. As a member of the MassMap (Massachusetts Long Term Care Mutual Aid Plan) organization, we have consistently maintained a continuity of operations plan for numerous emergencies, including a pandemic. As such, Pond Home has implemented all Department of Public Health (DPH), Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) guidelines and recommendations specific to COVID-19 – some even before official recommendations were issued.

So, what does a typical day look like here at Pond Home last month, this month and for months unknown? Life, as we formerly knew it, has changed at our normally welcoming home, beginning the moment our valued employees arrive for work.

Upon entering, staff members must wait at the door or nurses’ station for another co-worker to take their temperature and check for signs and symptoms of the novel coronavirus. They then don personal protection equipment and thoroughly wash their hands before beginning their shift, with hand washing continuing throughout the day. As a result of new guidance issued by the CDC on April 3rd, all employees now wear surgical masks when near each other or residents. Residents are also wearing masks whenever staff members are in their

room or if they are walking in the hallways – the only time residents take masks off when not alone is if they require the assistance of an employee to eat.

Pond Home has the distinct advantage of most rooms being private with private bathrooms, making it easier to isolate residents. Anyone exhibiting signs or symptoms of **ANY** illness is directed to remain in their room.

Our concern is not only for the physical wellbeing of our cherished residents, but also for their emotional welfare. The last thing we want is for a sense of isolation to settle in. Creative and resourceful ideas for activity have become a significant portion of our everyday, individualized for each resident. If their health status allows, a minimum of one daily 1:1 session with a staff member is planned.

We recognize how heart wrenching it is for family members who are unable to visit their loved ones during this age of the coronavirus. Our administrator spends time communicating with family, providing them much-desired updates and doing her best to alleviate concerns that we all face and help solve problems. Residents and employees also get regular communication and updates to support their specific concerns.

We are doing our best to maintain the high morale of our respected employees whose concern for our residents follows them home each day...and who have their own loved ones and their own health to worry over. Attending the multiple, daily webinars that provide continually updated information about COVID-19 and its ramifications specifically to long-term care facilities has become another focus of the Director of Nursing and Administrator. Of course, sharing that information and new recommendations as quickly as possible with the Pond Home community is also a crucial added task.

We are blessed with many employees with years of experience working at our beloved Pond Home; their compassion, care and kindness is going a far distance to keep the health and spirits of our residents positive. Many staff see this moment and this time as their calling and purpose. We thank them for that dedication. That said, the reality is that despite all efforts and the grace of luck, the potential exists that some residents and/or employees will contract this disease – the same as at any other such facility.

We are all being tested by this unprecedented health crisis and while our days may be anything but normal at the present, what remains constant is our devotion to the residents who call Pond Home their home.