

Transcript
Coronavirus Q & A – Episode 20
August 20, 2020



Alex Metricarti: Hello! I'm Alex Metricarti, Chief Marketing and Public Relations Officer for Living Branches. Today is Thursday, August 20, 2020. I'm here with another weekly update. Ed Brubaker will be joining me again next week.

Let me start with Personal Care, Memory Care, and Health Care and tell you a little bit about what is happening in those communities right now. If you've been following along on the step guidance that has been issued from the state, our Living Branches communities are in step 2 of that guidance. Starting on Monday, August 24, residents of The Willows and Souderton Mennonite Homes, or Dock Woods in Health Care – those residents will be moving to step 3 of the guidance on Monday, August 24, provided that no one tests positive for COVID in the meantime. Oakwood Court and Harmony House residents will be moving to step 3 on Wednesday, August 26.

If you check our website, you'll see there is very detailed guidance about what it means to be in step 2 vs step 3 vs step 1. To summarize, the big difference that residents will see as we move from step 2 to step 3 is that we can offer a more regular activity/life enrichment schedule, residents can gather in larger group – still physically distanced of course – but we do have the opportunity to have groups that are larger than 10. And we'll also be able to have volunteers come back in and assist with some of those activities. Of course the only persons who are allowed on campus right now are volunteers who are residents who are volunteering. But still we'll be able to have them come back and work with residents in Personal Care, Health Care, and Memory Care, so we're excited about that.

Step 3 does not mean that residents are able to leave campus with families, aside from a medical outing. We will be able to have Living Branches sponsored outings, so perhaps go for a drive or out for ice cream or something along that line. But I've had several families ask, when can I bring mom home for a birthday party? Or, I want to take her out to dinner. Or we're going on vacation. That type of thing. Unfortunately we still do not have any guidance from the state of Pennsylvania as to when we might be able to have residents who are in Personal Care, Health Care, and Memory Care leaving campus for those types of outings.

The other thing about step 3 is that for visitation, we will still be using the visitation formats that we're using now. So we can have indoor visits. We can have outdoor visits. But we still cannot have visits in residents' apartments. So all visitation, per the state, right now needs to take place in what they're calling a neutral zone and it has to be monitored, as well.

I really want to take a minute and apologize to you if you're experiencing frustration with our current visitation protocols and policies. I've heard from several persons that they want to get in to see their loved ones – of course, that's the most important thing. And family members will reflect to me, it's good for the residents to be with their families. It's good for their physical wellbeing and good for their mental wellbeing. We completely agree. It is incredibly important. In fact, as we've been able to have longer visitation periods and have families here these last couple of weeks, we've certainly seen an improvement in the spirit of the communities and the joy that residents are again feeling.

The challenge that we're experiencing with this is that because those visits have to be monitored and they have to take place in a neutral zone, that means we have to have staff who are available to transport resident to those visits, to be there during the visits to make sure everything is sanitized, and then to transport residents back to their apartments. So what we're experiencing is that as our dining and life enrichment programs get back to normal, the staff that we were using from those department and other departments, like the marketing team for example, that we were using to facilitate different things. As those staff go back to their normal duties that leaves us scrambling to be sure we have enough staff to facilitate visitation.

One of the things that's very nice for us, considering that we have so many sister retirement communities in our area, often times we will check in with them to see if they have a solution to this problem, or how are you tackling this issue? So I thought to myself a-ha! I'm going to call some of the other communities in the area to see what they are doing to solve visitation issues. Maybe they've got a great idea that we can borrow from them. So I reached out to a couple of colleagues and discovered unfortunately that they are not anywhere near as far along in visitation policies as we are. They are either still doing window visits or chatbox visits – nothing indoors. So I was not able to glean any ideas from them, but I'm sure they'll be calling me in a few weeks when they move to this stage of visitation.

Please know we are working on the way we do visitation. We're doing everything we can to figure out a way to more smoothly allow people to get in. The problem we're running into right now is because we've increased the length of visits from 20 minutes to 45 minutes, which we did specifically because we heard from you that 20 minutes was not enough time, because we have lengthened those visits, now we're experiencing difficulty having enough scheduling time and staff to make those visits work. So we are working on that.

I've heard from a couple of people this week saying, when is this all going to go back to normal? And when can we go visits in my mom's apartment like we usually do? Unfortunately we have no guidance from the state whatsoever on when that might occur. I had something happen this week that gave me a little bit of insight as to why they're not providing guidance. This week the Department of Health issued an order regarding PPE – masks, gloves, gowns, that type of things – and the order came out saying basically all long-term care communities in the state of Pennsylvania are required to have PPE for their staff and also for residents if an outbreak were

to occur. And I was kind of flipped when I got this order because it's August. This thing started in March and they're just putting an order out about this now? But I was reminded that not all communities are blessed to be in the position we're in with adequate PPE supplies and enough financial resources to buy PPE. So even though we're at a stage where we have PPE, but also we're at a stage where we're able to allow increased visitation – not all retirement communities are in that same stage. And of course the guidance that the state is issuing needs to be for the retirement communities as a whole, not just ones like ours. So it's going to be some time I think before they feel confident in issuing guidance on how visitation might be able to occur again in resident apartments. So for the foreseeable future, we're going to be dealing with these types of situations with visitation in monitored, neutral areas. So that's going to be an adjustment for us all, but based on the smiling faces and the singing and the happiness that I've seen from our residents this week, it's still a great opportunity. They enjoy being with you so much, so we're going to continue to do everything we can to make that happen for our residents living in Personal Care, Memory Care, and Health Care.

The questions I've received this week from Residential Living residents have centered mostly around the question of visiting and quarantine and the quarantine states list. I have received a few questions asking when can I have overnight visitors to stay in my apartment or cottage or villa? At this time we are not allowing overnight visitors in any of our Residential Living accommodations at Living Branches. We will have a Coronavirus Response Team sub-group committee meeting in September to talk about whether or not we feel we can change some of that guidance. But as far as where we're at with visitation right now, we are not permitting overnight visitation to take place at this time. We really want to do everything we can to minimize the number of people who are coming on campus, and that's one way that we can do that.

Another couple of questions about the quarantine state list. Please remember that if you have a family member or friend who wants to come visit and they live in one of the states that is on the Pennsylvania quarantine state list, they will not be able to come on campus. They would not get past the screening. If you need to review which states are on that list, there is a link on our website and you check it there under the pandemic guidance for coronavirus.

I also had questions from residents who indicated that they would be going to one of the quarantine states, I think to visit family. There was a special family event that they felt they could not miss. And so they were asking if they do that, what happens when they come back to campus? And if you do travel to one of the states on the quarantine list, number one, please be careful while you're there. We have had staff members who have gone to quarantine states and come back and we do believe – they're out being tested right now for COVID. They've not been on campus. We quarantined them when they came back. But it does seem like the virus is transmitting more freely in those quarantine states. So if you do go, please be careful. Make sure you wear your mask and stay away from people as much as you possibly can. When you come back to Pennsylvania, you will be required to quarantine for 14 days. And what that means for us is you cannot have contact with staff persons or residents at Living Branches. So be prepared to stay in your residence for the entire 14 days. If you need to go to the grocery

store or go to a doctor, of course you can do that, but please do everything you can to not come in contact with any Living Branches residents.

The other thing I should mention, too. As I was mentioning earlier, there is an increased opportunity now for residents who want to volunteer. People have told me they used to volunteer in Health Care or Personal Care and they would like to get back to those activities. We will be able to do that in the next number of weeks. If you are interesting in resuming some of your volunteer duties for residents in Personal Care, Health Care, or Memory Care, please reach out to Lynne Allebach or Jennifer Wilson.

This weekend is our Chicken BBQ weekend and week. It looks a little bit different than it has in years past – that's for sure. But it's nice to get back to some kind of fun activity. I know there have been quite a few things happening on the campuses this week. A reminder that our chicken bbq meals will be taking place this Saturday, August 22 between 12:00 and 2:00 p.m. If you live at Souderton Mennonite Homes in an apartment they will deliver your meal to you. If you live at Souderton in a cottage or a villa, pick up is via drive thru at the lower carport entrance. If you are at Dock Woods in an apartment, you can pick up your meal at the Hearthside Bistro. If you are at Dock Woods in a cottage or villa, pick up is via drive thru at the Fisher Auditorium entrance. Either way we'll be having chicken for everyone. If you live in Personal Care, Health Care, or Memory Care at any of our campuses, your noon meal will be the chicken bbq meal. At 2:00 p.m. that afternoon on in-house TV, will be the concert from the Gold City Quartet. And then Sunday at 6:00 p.m. is the annual hymn sing. It will be a virtual hymn sing and you can tune in on in-house TV.

This past week the Fund Development team ran our first online auction and they were very pleased with how that went. They raised over \$7,000 to help support the Agape Fund for benevolent care. So thank you very much for your participation in that.

As always, if you have any coronavirus related questions, please feel free to email me at coronavirusquestions@livingbranches.org or call the hotline at 215-565-2412. You can also check our website at livingbranches.org/coronavirus. Our updates are there. We are so pleased that we continue to not have any coronavirus cases on any of our campuses and we hope that continues for a very long time. Please have a great week. And I'll talk to you again next week. Thank you!