



815 Forest Avenue | Northfield, Minnesota 55057
507.664.8800 TEL | 507.645.0942 FAX

July 24, 2020

Re: Essential Caregiver Program

Dear Family and Friends of Three Links,

Although social distancing and physical separation are still important to keep residents safe, we are taking steps to combat the unintended consequences of prolonged social isolation and to maintain overall health and wellbeing for residents in all of our locations including **Three Links Care Center, Cottages, Millstream Commons and The Villages of Lonsdale.**

We are pleased to announce that we are creating a new “Essential Caregiver” program in accordance with guidelines released from Minnesota Department of Health (MDH). Our goal through this program is to help our residents who are missing essential care previously provided by a loved one or outside caregiver prior to the visitor restrictions required by state and federal guidelines due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This new program will be implemented in late August and is a narrowly defined exception to visitor restrictions which may allow certain cares to be provided by a personal caregiver from outside our community.

We ask for patience over the next several weeks as we design and prepare for a program that balances the safety, health and wellness for all who live and work at Three Links locations and for those who serve in the Essential Caregiver role. We recognize the critical role family members and other outside caregivers often have in the care and support of residents.

We are providing some information to you in advance of this program starting so you have a better understanding of what it means to be an Essential Caregiver as well as the policies and protocols that will be in place for those who serve in this role.

Essential Caregiver (EC) Program*

Criteria for residents receiving EC visits

1. Resident was previously receiving regular care and support prior to the pandemic from someone who fit the EC role. The care provided may have been mental health support.
2. Family and/or staff feels that resident would benefit from EC visit.
3. Resident has expressed wishes for a designated EC.
4. Resident has demonstrated increased mood or behavioral health symptoms, or change in condition including increased confusion, inactivity, experiencing adverse psychosocial effects of isolation, increased use of medication for anxiety, increased sleep or sleeplessness, weight loss, or decreased ADL function noted most likely from prolonged isolation from family and friends and has not been alleviated by “in house” measures by staff and providers or use of outdoor/window visits.
5. End-of-life/compassionate care circumstances.

Criteria for Essential Caregiver

1. Must be 18 years of age or older.
2. Residents will be consulted and can designate one EC if they choose.
3. Those interested in becoming an EC, should contact:
 - Care Center | Social Services | Kaleena Wolf: 507-664-8821
or Stephanie Rezac: 507-664-8857
 - Cottage East | Pat Sherley, Executive Director | 507-664-8809
 - Cottage West | Pat Sherley, Executive Director | 507-664-8809
 - Cottage on Forest | Pat Sherley, Executive Director | 507-664-8809
 - Millstream Commons | Kathy Olson, Executive Director | 507-650-9627
 - The Villages of Lonsdale | Marilyn Pint, Executive Director | 507-744-3450
4. Essential Caregivers will be determined based on consultation/assessment with our interdisciplinary team including Administrator or Executive Director, Director of Nursing or Director of Health Services and Social Services (Care Center). The interdisciplinary team will review each request to determine whether it meets the criteria of MDH guidance and is deemed a beneficial intervention to the individual plan of care before an individual can begin serving as an Essential Caregiver.
5. EC must sign and abide by measures outlined in the “Essential Caregiver Acknowledgment of risks and procedures relating to caregiver visits (COVID-19) form” The form outlines the following:
 - A. EC must provide and wear surgical face mask, face shield or goggles.
 - B. Infection control measures
 - C. Hand hygiene
 - D. Contacting Three Links location if symptoms develop within 14 days of resident visit.
 - E. Show proof of negative COVID-19 test within the last 5 days of first EC visit.

- F. No symptoms of COVID-19 (Fever or chills, cough, Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting or diarrhea)
- G. No known exposure to COVID-19.

Guidelines for EC Visit

1. EC must schedule a visit a minimum of 24 hours in advance by calling Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. EC visits are preferred during regular business hours, however, evening and weekend visits may be arranged.
 - Care Center - Bridge and Crossroads: 507-649-2873 | Pathways: 507-649-2781
 - Cottage East | Pat Sherley, Executive Director | 507-664-8809
 - Cottage West | Pat Sherley, Executive Director | 507-664-8809
 - Cottage on Forest | Pat Sherley, Executive Director | 507-664-8809
 - Millstream Commons | Ginger Killen | 650.0141
 - The Villages of Lonsdale | Kathy Owens | 507-744-3453
2. EC must enter at entrance designated by location.
3. No pets are allowed.
4. Door screener will conduct screening of EC including temperature check prior to entry.
5. Acknowledgement form to be signed by EC if not already on file.
6. EC must provide and wear surgical face mask, face shield or goggles to enter building and for duration of visit.
7. Must wash hands upon entry and practice frequent hand hygiene during their visit.
8. Length of visit shall be one hour or per the discretion of the interdisciplinary team, during a scheduled block of time.
9. The EC will limit their movement to designated areas only; common places are restricted.
10. EC must maintain a distance of 6 feet from other residents.
11. EC must maintain a distance of 6 feet from employees.
12. If conditions are favorable for the EC to take the resident for a walk, staff will escort the resident to meet the EC at the front door. This is contingent on available staff.
13. The EC will not take the resident out into the community except for essential medical appointments. Resident will need to be placed in a 14-day quarantine if they are brought out into community.
14. The EC will not be allowed to visit a resident during a resident's 14-day quarantine and must not visit when a resident is positive for COVID-19 or symptomatic, unless the visit is for compassionate care.
15. Three Links limits the number of ECs in each location to no more than 5% of the number of residents at one time or according to the availability of designated spaces.

16. To visit a resident in the safest possible manner, the following visits are recommended before considering EC visits.

1. Virtual visit
2. Window visit
3. Outdoor visit

Criteria for suspending EC visits

1. If a resident indicates they do not wish to have an EC visit.
2. EC fails to follow infection control measures or other guidelines.
3. Resident displays increased agitation with EC visits.
4. EC's behavior is disruptive to other residents, staff or operations.
5. EC answers "yes" to any screening questions or has a fever.
6. EC displays symptoms of COVID-19 during their visit.
7. If there is an outbreak in the facility – defined as one employee or one resident testing positive for COVID-19 in the facility.
8. Personal Protective Equipment supplies are low.
9. Crisis/contingency staffing plan has been engaged.
10. Limited access to testing for residents.
11. Significant increases in updated new COVID-19 case within geographical radius.
12. The Three Links interdisciplinary team reserves the right to suspend EC visits at any time at their discretion.

*Criteria and Guidelines for the EC program are subject to change at any time.

We recognize the concern you may have that not everyone will be able to serve as an Essential Family Caregiver. We also deeply feel the desire of our residents and their loved ones to be connected in a more meaningful way.

At this time, non-essential indoor visits in our settings are still not allowed per the Minnesota Department of Health. We are working on a plan to reopen our settings to visitation once we receive updated guidance from MDH and meet the requirements that will be specified in that guidance. We look forward to the day when we can warmly welcome all visitors back into our community.

Sincerely,



Mark Anderson, CEO
Three Links