

Dear Residents, Family Members and Friends,



This newsletter is being sent to all responsible parties listed as the primary contact for the Baldwin Care Center. Birch Haven Assisted Living is sending this newsletter to responsible parties. The Apartment Manager distributes copies to the Birchwood Apartment tenants. Responsible parties can direct their family members to the Baldwin Care Center website at www.baldwincarecenter.com to read current and previous newsletters. If there is a topic you would like discussed in the newsletter, please feel free to contact me via email at elafavor@baldwincarecenter.com or by phone at 715-684-3231, Ext. 103.



**WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT
of HEALTH SERVICES**

Since the last newsletter, there have been several memos from the State of Wisconsin Department of Health Services, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS) and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). The State of Wisconsin updated **"Safer Visits in Assisted Living"** on December 22, 2021. The guidance indicates that when facilities are located in a county with Substantial to High levels of COVID-19 community transmission, all residents and their visitors (regardless of vaccination status) should wear a well-fitted mask and physically distance at all times. The resident can choose to have close contact (including touch) with their visitor. St. Croix county and every other county in Wisconsin with the exception of Iron county (which is Substantial) are at a High level of community transmission. On December 23, 2021 the State of Wisconsin distributed a memo titled **"Prevention and Control of Acute Respiratory Illness Outbreaks in Long-Term Care Facilities"**. The memo provides guidance to staff of all types of long-term care facilities regarding testing for, recommended treatment of, and precautions to be used for all respiratory viruses. On December 23, 2021 the CDC released a memo titled **"Interim Guidance for Managing Healthcare Personnel with SARS-CoV-2 Infection or Exposure to SARS-CoV-2"**. This interim guidance is intended to assist with the following: 1. Determining the duration of the restriction from the workplace for healthcare personnel (HCP) with SARS CoV-2 infection and 2. Assessment of risk and application of workplace restrictions for asymptomatic HCP with exposure to SARS-CoV-2. There were some pretty significant changes to the time frames that HCP can return to work if they are COVID-19 positive. The CDC indicated that under conventional circumstances HCP should be restricted from work for 10 days or 7 days with a negative test, if symptomatic or mildly symptomatic (with improving symptoms). In a contingency situation, HCP can return within 5 days with/without a negative test, if asymptomatic or mildly symptomatic (with improving symptoms). In a staffing crisis situation, HCP have no work restrictions, with prioritization considerations (e.g., asymptomatic or mildly symptomatic). In discussion with the Medical Director of the facility, the Baldwin Care Center campus will continue to follow the guidance for a conventional situation which would mean that staff would be off for 10 days following a positive COVID test. If there was a crisis situation in the future, we would re-evaluate at that time.

On December 28, 2021 CMS released a memo titled **"Guidance for the Interim Final Rule – Medicare and Medicaid Programs; Omnibus COVID-19 Health Care Staff Vaccination"**. This memo provides guidance to state survey agencies for determining a skilled nursing facility's compliance with the vaccination mandate for staff. If a facility is not in compliance, CMS has a variety of established enforcement remedies. For nursing homes this includes civil monetary penalties, denial of payments and as a final measure, termination of participation from the Medicare and Medicaid programs. Currently the guidance does not apply to the states that have filed action regarding the mandate. This does apply to the state of Wisconsin. Within 30 days of the issuance of the memo all facilities have to demonstrate that policies and procedures have been developed ensuring all staff are vaccinated for COVID-19 and 100% of staff have received the first dose of the vaccine or have been granted a qualifying exemption. Currently there are approximately 340 nursing homes in the state of Wisconsin. There are currently 9 who have 100% of their staff vaccinated. When the Wisconsin Department of Health Services comes to survey facilities they will be looking at the vaccination rate and citing facilities based on their vaccination rate. They will also look at the number of cases of COVID-19 that residents have had and cite facilities at a higher level based on those numbers. Monetary penalties for can be up to \$10,000 per day. I don't often add my opinion when reporting updates to all of you, but I feel it necessary regarding this issue. All nursing homes across the state are struggling with a staffing crisis. As a result, census has decreased because facilities can't accept residents if they don't have any staff. All nursing facilities are struggling financially as a result. This is not the time to be imposing large fines in addition to other penalties for nursing



homes that are struggling. All of us are doing the very best we can with the resources we have. I am very concerned about what this new CMS vaccine mandate will bring for nursing facilities across the state and country.

The Baldwin Care Center staff did have nursing staff test positive cases within the last two weeks. We rapid tested all residents that were impacted right away. All of the tests were negative. We then began testing all residents with PCR tests that need to be sent to the lab. We will again do another sweep of residents next week to make certain there are no cases. Please feel free to let us know if you have questions. As a reminder, positive staff or resident cases no longer impact visitation.



Thank you to the family of Corrine Young for a monetary donation to the Baldwin Care Center. It is greatly appreciated. Thank you to the family of Mary Monson for the poinsettias that were donated from Trinity Lutheran Church in Mary's memory.

*Eileen LaFavor,
Administrator*

LIVE 2 BE HEALTHY

Live 2 be healthy is a program with nationally certified personal trainers who come in to help our residents become stronger in their core and obtain better balance and better health. This group was provided to us by a grant from Juniper, a company out of Minnesota that specializes in helping the older generation stay fit and reduce falls.

A study was done at Park View Nursing home in Woodville, WI. They had Live 2 Be Healthy prior to the program being funded by Juniper and they found that the residents who came to 60% of the classes found they were 47% LESS likely to fall and those who attended less than 60% of the classes found they were 88% MORE likely to fall!

We here at Birch Haven Assisted Living and Birchwood Apartments wanted this program for a few reasons. First, it was free, second, it would increase the health of the residents, thirdly it would decrease the risk of falls, and lastly, they had certified personal trainers who come in and lead the classes.

