



August 31, 2020

Dear Residents of RiverWoods Durham, RiverWoods Exeter, and Birch Hill,

On August 13th the NH Department of Public Health put out guidance describing the phased “reopening” of visitation for the Assisted Living, Memory Support and Nursing care neighborhoods. Based on the State’s new guidelines, we can now allow a limited number of indoor visits for our health care residents to go with the ongoing outdoor visits that have already been in place. These indoor visits will be for folks who cannot be well served by an outdoor visit - typically people who are at the end of life or are unable to go outdoors due to a disability or advanced dementia.

Our health care teams will handle the arrangement for any visits to the health care/supportive living communities, whether inside or outside. Our mindset (and the State’s) is still “outside is better than inside” and we will continue to operate with strict adherence to thoroughly screen visitors, maintain social distancing, and proper masking and hand hygiene. These visits are also required to be monitored by a staff member. Though this is clearly not “back to normal,” we are excited to expand the visitation option for our most isolated population of residents.

The state guidance also inspired us to think and rethink our RiverWoods guidelines regarding visitors on the independent living side of our communities, our plans for indoor/communal dining and how we can/may handle holiday meals as we start to think of the fall and winter months ahead.

In our thinking we considered a variety of factors, including our testing ability and testing “turnaround time;” case trends within our state, our counties and our communities; and other external risk factors that exist, like school openings (or not) and how that may impact community spread and staffing.

At this time, we are not going to reopen our IL communities for indoor visitation. Our reasoning is focused on three things; first, we have the ability to allow for outdoor visitors, and many of you are taking advantage of that option. Second,

you are able to visit your family in their home if an outdoor visit is not a viable option for you. Lastly, there are a host of unknowns related to testing availability and the school re-openings that may positively or negatively impact our ability to track and contain cases in the near future. This last factor will become more clear in the coming weeks.

However, we do know that the seasons are changing, and outdoor visits will not always be an option. Our plan is to maintain the current guidelines through October 1st, and then, if the number of new cases stays stable (and the rate of positive cases stays low) we will transition to allowing for family and friends to visit (in a limited way and in limited numbers) inside our communities.

Additionally, we are planning to begin some version of “served” dining during the month of October. This will likely be a new version of normal for a while, with distancing, reservations and adjusted service. Transitioning back to this type of dining option will require that we have a safe way to handle more staff on site, that we continue to have low community spread in our state and our counties, and that we have no active cases within a given community.

As the state reopens restaurants and other businesses we want to lag and evaluate the impacts before we move. We are intentionally slow in this regard. I know that is hard for some, but as a community we want to err on the side of caution. For months we have been saying that we need to remain patient and that science would catch up. It is. Testing options are expanding. Last week a newly approved Abbot test was announced that can be done **without a lab**. This may be available to us later in the fall. Testing turnaround times are still irregular (currently they are negatively impacted by all the testing of college students), but more testing options are becoming available. The sensitivity of the rapid test machines has increased steadily, for people with symptoms, and we have several on order (though we don’t expect them until October). The availability of rapid test machines and test kits is greatly impacted by the federal governments purchasing actions, but we expect that to settle in the next few months. Additionally, we are hearing hopeful news on the vaccine front, with repeated talk of a viable option around the start of 2021.

This virus is quite a doozy, but science is catching up. So, for now we are going to try to hold steady and maintain our patience. There may still be a long way to go,

but we have come a long way already. Things are better but they are still fragile. Patience is stretched for all of us, but we are still finding ways to adjust. You, and our staff, have my heartfelt thanks for your flexibility and your commitment to keeping our communities safe.

Stay Healthy my Friends,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Justine Vogel". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "V".

Justine Vogel
TRWG CEO