



March 9, 2021 (Updates from February 25 are in red)

To Our Residents, and their Families and Friends,

We remain grateful that the COVID-19 mitigation strategies that we started putting in place early last year appear to continue to be successful at this point. We again thank our staff, residents, and families for their adherence to all the protocols and protection procedures.

As the COVID-19 vaccine rolls out in skilled nursing facilities, many questions have arisen about when we will see changes to restrictions on visitation and other activities. CMS and CDC have indicated they will not issue changes to the existing guidance until more is known about the real-world impact of the vaccine. Specifically, while clinical trials have shown that the vaccines have been proven to be extremely effective at preventing illness caused by COVID-19, we do not yet know whether individuals who are vaccinated can still contract COVID-19 (without symptoms) and spread it to others. So, if a vaccinated visitor enters the facility, it's possible they could spread COVID-19 to others.

We are aware of the new CDC guidance for Fully Vaccinated People (click [here](#)), and even though the CDC recommendation is for non-health care settings, we see it as a transitional step in the right direction.

Given the additional research that needs to be done to ensure the best protection inside nursing homes, CMS and the CDC are hesitant to modify current guidance pertaining to visitation restrictions. For the health and safety of our residents and staff, Hillcrest supports this position. However, we have joined with our national association to request that this research be given priority status. In a [letter](#) to the Director of the CDC, we formally requested focused support, explaining the burden that the current restrictions place on residents and staff of long term care.

Despite the continued restrictions, our goal remains focused on safety while we explore ways we can allow limited visitation and meet all the guidance requirements. We realize how important this is for many of you. While we analyze visitation opportunities under current and future guidance, please know that we are and will continue to offer our main lobby window visits (with or without assistance) for residents who are not under isolation or quarantine protocols, and virtual visits via FaceTime, Google Duo, Skype, and Zoom for all residents. We suggest these existing options to visit with your loved one. As other options become available, we will communicate additional details.

We remain hopeful these vaccines will ultimately prove to be effective and allow us to open back up. You can support efforts to meet this goal, by promoting the vaccine and by receiving the vaccine as soon as you are eligible and have access. You can find a list of hospital and health department resources at <https://covid19.ncdhhs.gov/findyourspot>.

Please reach out to us directly if you have any questions. We will continue to take steps available to us to protect your loved ones and help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Sincerely,

Ted Smith, Administrator
Hillcrest Durham

Lisa Lee, Administrator
Hillcrest Raleigh