

## **PMMA looking toward vaccine with hope, caution**

*December 17, 2020*

After the toughest 7 weeks of the pandemic for PMMA's (Presbyterian Manors of Mid-America's) 15 communities, the network of senior living communities is looking ahead as COVID-19 vaccines become available.

As county positivity rates skyrocketed into the teens and twenties, PMMA communities waged a battle against COVID-19 on their campuses. Between November 1 and December 15, all 15 of PMMA's communities experienced outbreaks of COVID-19 among staff and residents.

"This pandemic has been a marathon, and not a sprint," said Bruce Shogren, PMMA president and CEO. "The last few weeks have been the most difficult emotionally, mentally and physically for our teams across the PMMA system. The news that two vaccines are likely to be rolling out in the next few weeks is providing hope that the day is coming when we can safely return to normal."

On December 3, Kansas Gov. Laura Kelly announced that residents of long-term care facilities and health care workers would be among the first to receive the COVID-19 vaccine once an emergency use authorization was approved by the FDA. Missouri's State Health Director, Dr. Randall Williams, announced similar plans December 4.

"We are pleased that PMMA communities are prioritized to be among the very first to provide COVID-19 vaccinations to eligible PMMA residents and employees as specified by the federal and state roll-out plans," Shogren said.

PMMA communities have prepared for the rollout by signing up for the Pharmacy Partnership for Long-Term Care Program. PMMA's campuses will work with Walgreens or CVS to schedule 3 clinic sessions at PMMA communities, 21 to 28 days apart, to ensure all eligible residents and staff have the opportunity to be immunized.

"While the vaccine is not mandatory, PMMA strongly encourages all of our eligible residents and employees to carefully consider what these vaccinations will mean for themselves and our PMMA communities," Shogren said. "As PMMA receives the doses of COVID-19 vaccines in the coming weeks, we ask that our residents, their representatives and our employees consider this special opportunity and the role they can play in reestablishing the safe and family-filled PMMA communities we all knew prior to COVID-19."

Currently, roll-out plans only address those residents living in skilled nursing and assisted living, and not those who reside in independent living as part of a Continuing Care Retirement Community. Health care workers who provide direct resident care also are included, however

the non-direct resident care employees in areas such as environmental services and dining, are not included in the first wave of the vaccine rollout.

“As front-line providers of health care services, our employees are among those at greatest risk of COVID-19 infection, and our residents are at the greatest risk of serious illness or death if they are infected,” Shogren said. “The COVID-19 vaccine should provide a significant means of better protecting all within our communities, including our residents, our employees, and everyone’s family members.”

Communities will continue to follow CMS and Kansas guidance regarding screening and surveillance testing for employees. CMS issued guidance in late August requiring senior living communities with skilled nursing to conduct regular testing of employees, volunteers, and other service providers on a frequency based on county positivity rates, and Gov. Kelly issued an executive order December 9, 2020, requiring state licensed adult care homes, including assisted living communities, to follow the same procedures. PMMA implemented this guidance in early September and continues to conduct surveillance testing at its 14 campuses that offer skilled nursing. Fort Scott Presbyterian Village in Fort Scott, Kan., is licensed for assisted living and began surveillance testing December 14, 2020.

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*For clinical response questions, contact Jeanne Gerstenkorn, vice president for health and wellness, PMMA, at [jgerstenkorn@pmma.org](mailto:jgerstenkorn@pmma.org) or 316-685-1100 or 316-250-8197.*

*For operations response questions, contact Bill Taylor, chief operating officer, at [btaylor@pmma.org](mailto:btaylor@pmma.org) or 316-685-1100 or 785-643-5134.*

*For all other inquiries contact:*

*Karen Harriman, chief marketing officer and senior vice president for communications and public relations, at [kharriman@pmma.org](mailto:kharriman@pmma.org) or 316-685-1100 or 314-605-6175.*

*Lisa Diehl, corporate communications director, at [ldiehl@pmma.org](mailto:ldiehl@pmma.org) or 316-685-1100 or 316-619-0531.*

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