

TO: PMMA Residents, Family Members and Visitors
FROM: Bruce H. Shogren, President/CEO
CC: PMMA Board of Trustees, Senior Leadership & Executive Directors
RE: COVID-19 Update – **“Let Us Count Our Blessings”**
DATE: September 3, 2021

As I watch the numbers of cases rise due to the Delta strain of the COVID-19 virus, my mind returns to a very similar situation in April 2020 when I was writing my fifth letter to residents and families. That letter began with the following:

“As I begin to write this fifth message to you, one thing stands out –

“PMMA is blessed with dedicated employees, wonderful residents and understanding families.

It has been difficult living with the tough decisions that we, the leadership of PMMA, have put in place to protect your loved ones. It is because of the trust you place in this organization, along with your fortitude, that PMMA and its communities have been able to keep the COVID virus at bay.”

Seventeen months later, we know that PMMA was not able to keep the virus at bay after the opening of the States; but we did limit its reach. Throughout the hardship of enduring COVID’s impact of restricted visitations, limited and no access, visitation protocols, testing and vaccinations, we endured. We saw light at the end of the tunnel and thought we had survived the worst of this “super bug”. However, the light only lasted several weeks before we began dealing with a much stronger and 50% more transmissible Delta variant of COVID. There seems to be no end to this virus’s life and its ability to mutate into a stronger version of itself.

So why do I think the opening in my fifth letter pertains now? Because **PMMA is blessed with dedicated employees, wonderful residents and understanding families**. This trusting relationship is born out of a 72-year heritage of recognizing a need and establishing a mission of service to meet that need. The commitment to our mission has passed the test of time with generation after generation building upon that trust.

Which leads me to a question that seems to be a current concern to our families. Why hasn’t PMMA mandated vaccinations for all of its employees? Your question about vaccinated employees is valid so let me try to explain PMMA’s approach to getting all of our employees vaccinated. As a not-for-profit, faith-based organization, PMMA strongly believes that it is critical to follow our mission of providing quality senior services guided by Christian values. **The Christian values that our mission speaks to are Love, Compassion and Respect:**

- *Love – We think about others before ourselves.*
- *Compassion – ‘Standing in someone else’s shoes’*
- *Respect – Valuing everyone and everything and celebrating our differences.*

I am especially proud of PMMA’s employees during this pandemic because they **lived these values** during a time it would have been easier to walk away from the grueling effort they performed every day and continue to perform seventeen months later. So, that is why PMMA leadership is pushing our philosophy to get vaccinated for the sake of others. This simple gesture equates to the Christian principle of Love – to think about others before ourselves. We all know how much our employees love our residents. What a blessing for our residents and PMMA!

COVID-19 Update – “Let Us Count Our Blessings”
September 3, 2021

At this time, we have a system-wide vaccination rate of 97% for our residents and 66% for our employees. We have a goal to have all employees to vaccinate – unless an employee falls under those standards and exceptions established by CMS, which we are waiting to receive.

Their commitment and dedication to providing quality care is in their blood, which is underscored during the pandemic. PMMA is working diligently to make sure all employees recognize the need to vaccinate is about doing the right thing to protect others. To help with this effort and enhance our ongoing education about the vaccines, we have created a “**Why Vax**” campaign based upon the doubts and concerns that we have heard from our employees. It reminds them of the avenues for speaking with our medical directors and nurses about their concerns with the vaccines. These concerns have been added to our Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) documents already being utilized in our communities. The FAQ’s have new embedded links to videos of fellow employees who talk about their initial doubts and concerns and why they decided to get vaccinated.

We are aware many of our employees were unsure of the vaccinations because they were originally designated as Emergency Use Approval (EUA) and not fully approved by U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). However, with the FDA approval for the first COVID-19 vaccine known as the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine, we believe that concern has and will continue to be addressed as the other COVID-19 vaccines, such as Moderna and Johnson & Johnson, are approved by the FDA this Fall.

With that said, the **Why Vax** campaign’s purpose is to help alleviate the doubts and concerns of vaccinating for COVID, while reminding our employees that PMMA has a heritage of trust. But more importantly, PMMA wants its employees to know we value them and consider them a blessing, which means we will take every means possible to keep them safe from COVID-19 including giving them time off to “get their shots” and providing incentives for completing their vaccinations.

PMMA’s philosophy remains the same, even though President Biden’s August 28 announcement that *U.S. Nursing homes must use workers vaccinated against COVID-19 or risk losing Medicare and Medicaid funding*. We wish mandating vaccinations was not happening for just our part of the healthcare spectrum at this time, it does address the need to vaccinate in order to contain the Delta virus. In other words, by singling out only one sector of healthcare providers, this federal mandate demonstrates a lack of understanding of how health care is provided through a continuum of services of which nursing homes are only a part. In fact, this federal mandate assures unvaccinated employees an option to move to other healthcare organizations that are not under the same mandate (hospitals, assisted living communities). It also intensifies an ongoing staffing crisis that long-term care providers have been experiencing since the beginning of this pandemic. And, it certainly does not help PMMA to retain our current employees who are unvaccinated.

Today we are blessed with tools of vaccinations, equipment and medication to help all of us survive and end this pandemic. These tools are meant to be gifts to those we care about, treasure and love... the people I refer to as blessings to PMMA – our residents, their family members and our employees. Take time to recognize and count our blessings, as we continue to navigate through the re-surge of this pandemic.

From the fullness of his grace, we have all received one blessing after another.

John 1:15

God’s Blessings,



Bruce H. Shogren
President/CEO