



# Thompson House

Rehabilitation & Nursing ■ Residential Care

April 8, 2020

To All of the Families and Friends of our Residents at Thompson House:

**T**he reality of **COVID-19** has become the focus of our daily lives. While we are committed to keeping our residents and staff safe, the outcomes of the pandemic will not be known for an unspecified amount of time. The initiation of signs at the borders indicate the severity of community impact on everything we do. People who enter the State of Vermont are told to isolate for 14 days.

**What is treatment for COVID-19 if someone were to be diagnosed?** The first step is to isolate. We are a closed society and have put in place every possible precaution and recommendation from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS), as well as the Vermont Department of Health. The fact remains that there are still many unknowns and that a person may be infected without being symptomatic. We are faced with the planning of what to do if and when the virus makes its way into our facility. We have emergency plans in place for all forms of disasters including pandemic. Our plans include isolation and treatment here, whenever possible. We know that the mortality rate for our population of elders is particularly high due to the comorbidities of diseases. Based on the cases we have witnessed in Vermont, as well as those across the country, we know the potential effects of the virus on those in long-term care facilities, and those with immunosuppressed systems.

The world has witnessed the situation in Italy, where insufficient planning resulted in shortages of personal protective equipment and physicians having to decide who would be treated with the limited equipment and supplies that they had. We are now facing what treatment here would look like for our residents. The large majority of our residents have “Do Not Resuscitate” orders in place. This does not mean “do not treat.” It does pose ethical questions—the hard ones that no one wants to hear or face. **What does COVID-19 look like for our residents, your loved ones?** There is no cure or vaccine available at the present time. This means that the virus takes its course while we treat symptoms. A major symptom is difficulty breathing, which we would treat with a respirator in the majority of cases. This means intubation with a tube and the machine doing the breathing for the patient. This would be in direct conflict with the majority of our “Do Not Resuscitate” COLSTs that we do on admission. For those of our residents with “Do Not Resuscitate” orders, the treatment of COVID-19 would take on a “Palliative” form. Palliative treatment means that we do everything possible to keep a patient comfortable without transferring them to a higher level of care. Keeping such patients in-house, with familiar faces, we treat their symptoms at the end of life with dignity and compassion.

It truly pains me to write these words, but I feel that not writing this would be more detrimental. We need to prepare for the worst and hope that everything we have done to reduce the chance of COVID-19 coming into our facility is enough. You know that each and every one of your family members holds a special place in my heart and are why I do what I do. I have always been honest with each and every one of you, and this is the reality of where we are. I am available by phone if you have any specific questions.

We are all in this together.

Sincerely,

Dane A. Rank  
*Administrator*