

Buckner Retirement Services Weekly Update May 4, 2020

Dear Buckner Residents and Families,

Welcome to the new normal. I have worked in senior living for nearly 30 years and I never dreamed that we would face a global pandemic that completely changes every aspect of our work. I want to express to each of you my appreciation for your patience and cooperative spirit as we have redefined what it means to live in a senior living community.

When the coronavirus crisis began, we made a commitment to communicate with you as openly as possible about any possible cases of infection at each of our six communities. We immediately wrote out extensive communications protocols and procedures that would guide us and keep you informed. As this situation has continued, we have changed, adapted, and added new procedures based on input from many of you. This week, we are adding another feature to further enhance our communications with you. I will provide a weekly update to you starting with this first one.

Last week, Gov. Greg Abbott announced the “re-opening” of certain businesses in Texas. He included in his order directions that senior living communities are not affected by his new directive. In other words, we will continue with only allowing essential caregivers to enter our Buckner communities in order to mitigate risks for our residents. **As the state begins to reopen the economy, we too are developing opening plans and strategies even though ours may be on a different timeline than the general public. We’re working to ensure the health and safety of all stakeholders.**

Let me give you five reasons why Buckner, like most senior living communities, will not open and operate like the general public:

1. **Safety:** This is first and foremost. Seniors are identified as a high-risk segment of the population for COVID-19 infection.
2. **Proximity:** Because people living independent living residences have more mobility, there is a greater chance they can transmit the virus into other areas of a senior living community.
3. **Orders:** The State of Texas, along with the federal government are maintaining a strict “no visitor policy” at senior living communities.
4. **Fact:** The majority of deaths across the nation are occurring in senior living communities and nursing homes. In Dallas County, for example, 40% of all COVID-related deaths have occurred in long-term care communities.
5. **Fact:** A significant percentage of those tested in nursing homes, ships, prisons and other congregate settings have been asymptomatic, yet they are positive for the virus.

Health Overview:

As of today, our six retirement communities have reported a combined 26 cases of a Person Under Investigation (PUI). All 26 residents and staff were tested for COVID-19. Currently, 24 have tested negative for the virus, meaning they do not have it, while two PUIs are pending test results.

One third-party essential care provider, who served residents at Calder Woods in Beaumont, did test positive but our procedures prevented further transmission. All proper protocols were initiated immediately after our team was notified of the positive test, and we informed residents, families, and staff, as well the local health department. In addition, contact tracing was initiated immediately to determine others who may have been in contact with this caregiver. April 24 marked the end of the 14-day period since the care provider was last inside Calder Woods – there were no incidents and all our residents who may have been in contact received negative test results. It is a tribute to the hard work and dedication of our BRS associates that as of today, we have not had a single resident test positive in any of our senior living communities.

Forms of Communication:

We are using a variety of methods to communicate with you as potential cases (PUI) arise. Buckner Retirement Services provides real-time status about the coronavirus on our [website](#) for residents, families, and staff. Let me encourage you to check it often. In addition to the website, we are utilizing a system called OneCall that allows us to automatically contact you through voice and text messages. We are working hard to make sure our community alerts reach each resident's family, and we appreciate your feedback and understanding as we improve the process.

Each week, we also print out hard copies of any PUI notifications and provide those direct to residents in their rooms. In the unfortunate event there is a positive test, we will utilize all the above forms of communication as well as mail printed notifications to family listed by the resident as the primary contact.

Will you help us? During this process, we want to ensure you receive timely information. **Will you contact your Buckner community and confirm your cell phone number and email address?** This helps us get information to you quickly.

Ribbon Campaign:

Buckner is proud to launch Going Gold for Senior Living, a ribbon support campaign designed to highlight and encourage senior living residents and staff. I hope you will join us in supporting our residents and staff by displaying a gold ribbon outside your home.

We will provide complimentary gold ribbons to families via a drive-thru pick-up on Monday, May 11. Please check your community's Facebook page for the specific time – and tag us in any social media posts displaying your ribbon.

Resources Available to You:

We are fortunate Buckner Retirement Services is part of Buckner International. This affiliation gives us unique opportunities to access some of Buckner's broader services. One of those is the Buckner Counseling Center, which serves vulnerable children and families. Dr. Amy Curtis and her team have provided several tips and tools for dealing with stress in these days. This week, *DFW Child Magazine* published an [article](#) Dr. Curtis wrote about "6 Ways to (Emotionally) Make it Through the Pandemic." The full [version](#) of the article is also available on the Buckner blog. I think you'll find that this is excellent advice.

This year marks 141 years since Buckner was founded. I want you to think with me for a minute about how much of history Buckner has seen in 14 decades of service. From the turning of two centuries, to two world wars, Korea, Vietnam, and Afghanistan, Pearl Harbor and 9/11, the Great Depression and the Great Recession, countless oil booms and busts. Buckner has seen a lot, both good and bad. And we are still here, doing what we have done since 1879.

Someday into the future, that generation will look back on the global pandemic of 2020 and say of us, "They kept the faith and endured the trials." They will be looking at you when they say that.

Sincerely,
Charlie Wilson
Senior Vice President
Buckner Retirement Services