



August 5, 2021

Dear Residents, Staff, and Friends of Still Hopes,

It is with regret that I have to take a few steps backward, in order to help keep us safe, and to assure the best chance that we do not have significant issues regarding all our safety as it relates to COVID. As you are already aware, cases of COVID are again surging in our immediate area of Columbia, as well as in many other areas of our country. Last week Still Hopes had a COVID case, with a resident in our Greenway Building, and also discovered two cases among our staff by way of the required testing. At least two of the three people involved in these cases were fully vaccinated. All the appropriate tracing was conducted to assure that anyone who had been in contact with these individuals was notified and tested. Thankfully, NO additional cases were discovered.

Following are processes, which are effective immediately, to help keep our entire Still Hopes' family safe. Some of these are new changes and some are already in place:

1. Only fully vaccinated visitors will be allowed entry to any common space at Still Hopes. We also once again ask visitors to wear masks at all times while in our common spaces, even if they are vaccinated.
2. We also encourage our residents to return to wearing masks when outside their apartment or cottage. Masks have proven their worth, so use them to your advantage. Use them here on campus, but I also encourage you to go back to using them at church, at the grocery store, or whenever you are in a group setting.
3. Social Distancing is also a valuable method to not contract COVID from another person, so try as best you can to practice the 6-foot distance rule. Remember, as you think about this, that your fellow residents, who have been to church, the store, or some other group gathering, may have come into contact with and contracted COVID, even if they are vaccinated, and they can pass it along to you, even though you are vaccinated. The Delta Variant is thought to be many times more contagious than the original, and the original was passed along effectively enough to become a world-wide pandemic.
4. If you or your visitor have ANY signs or symptoms: We ask visitors to stay away from Still Hopes until they have confirmation from their physician that they are not contagious, or until they are 14 days past final symptoms. We ask residents to self-isolate in their apartment and let Tacey Gohean know they are not feeling up to par. (This is a process Still Hopes also follows with staff who have ANY signs or symptoms, and they know their protocol for reporting and isolating.)
5. Dining will stay as is for now, but if you have ANY signs or symptoms (even what you think are seasonal allergies) refrain from coming into any dining venue for a meal. We can deliver meals to you.
6. If you have ANY signs or symptoms in general (even if you think it is a summer cold, or seasonal allergies) we ask that you have a COVID test completed, seek an actual diagnosis from a physician, and follow the physician's orders to isolate yourself if you have ANY kind of contagious virus or disease.
7. We pledge to keep your Still Hopes environment as normal and engaging as is possible, while we work to assure that we do our best to keep the COVID virus at bay. To do this, Still Hopes needs the support and cooperation of every one of our family members. Ideas are always welcome!
8. We thank you for your dedication to this family, and we cherish your prayers and your help toward a safe and good outcome in what we hope is a short-lived resurgence of COVID-19.

9. Still Hopes STRONGLY encourages every person who remains unvaccinated, to make the decision to get vaccinated, and to do it as quickly as you can. There is indeed a lot of myth out there about reasons to distrust the vaccine, but these myths and fears are nothing when compared to the outcome for your own family if you contract COVID and take it home to them.

Local hospitals are informing us that they are seeing a significant surge in cases, and that their COVID dedicated units are anticipated now to be at their maximum capacity, with waiting lists for beds. We are learning that 90% of these hospitalizations are with people who have not been vaccinated, but we do see a good number of “breakthrough” cases, as was the case with at least two of the three people at Still Hopes.

This is not the time to let down our guard, or to simply plow forward with re-opening plans, even though that is what our hearts want to do. We need to double down on our commitment to keep COVID out of our ranks, away from our campus and away from each of you. Whether you are staff, resident, family member, or friend, you have a significant role to play in this effort. Commit now to do your part!

Please keep this letter and refer back to the 9 items listed on the memo herein. These steps are important for our successful navigation through this resurgence. We will continue our requirement for staff and vendors to check in every day at the beginning of their shift, for a signs and symptoms check, and to wear masks throughout their workday. Further, DHEC is mandating us to test all staff who work inside the licensed areas of our campus, twice each week. This frequency will continue until the positivity rate for Lexington and Richland Counties comes back within a much safer range. This number has increased from only 1.5% three weeks ago, to a number greater than 11% today. Nearly every county in South Carolina has moved from low risk back to high risk.

While it is true that almost every resident is vaccinated, and that it appears that vaccinated people who still contract COVID have much less severe symptoms, I will remind you that 10% of those in the hospital are folks who are fully vaccinated. If they are ill enough to require hospitalization, at a time when the hospitals need every available bed and are having difficulty staffing their units, we know that those individuals are truly very sick and that their conditions fully warrant hospitalization. Thus, this is not something that any of us want to play with, and it could be a very serious illness for any one among us.

Thank you for taking time to read this, and for partnering with me to keep yourself and our Still Hopes family safe.

Final note: If you have not as yet taken the vaccine, this is the time to make that decision and to get vaccinated. You may only have one chance at saving your life, or the life of a loved one, so please, please take it now.

God’s Peace to you all,

Danny Sanford, CEO