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NMG taking further steps to protect staff, residents, consumers and community

EAGLE LAKE, Maine – Lovingly teased by her employees as a germaphobe, Chief Executive Officer Michelle Raymond is leading her Pandemic Plan Team to meet, and in many cases exceed, CDC and other pandemic guidelines for COVID-19, particularly as they relate to sanitizing and safety measures. Those measures include, for example, assessing staff for symptoms at the start of each shift; social distancing for everyone affiliated with NMG, its services and facilities; and the strict restriction of non-essential visitors agency-wide.

“Our goal is to make our facilities the safest places to be in our community, for our staff and consumers,” Raymond reiterated in an email to her Administrative Team on Wednesday.

In his daily COVID-19 Update to the Pandemic Team, NMG’s Training & Safety Coordinator John Labrie re-emphasized the importance of social distancing. “Everything is designed to limit as much contact with others as possible,” he wrote on Thursday.

The biggest aspect of the organization’s Pandemic Plan last week was, as CEO Raymond describes it, the broadening and deepening of these social distancing tactics to the entire agency, including Waiver homes, Assisted Living, Section 28, Case Management, etc.

In addition to the steps noted in NMG’s March 17 Press Release (Click [HERE](#)), additional actions taken this week include, but are not limited to, the following:

- The Pandemic Team, led by Raymond, met on Monday to review the next steps of its robust Action Plan. They will meet again today, March 23, via teleconference.

Our mission is to provide individuals with the highest standard of care and help all of the people we serve enjoy life to the fullest potential.

- CDC recommendations are being monitored several times every day, and CDC statistics are being circulated daily.
- Staff is restricted from traveling for non-essential work reasons, with personal travel considerations also in play. For example, any staff member traveling outside of Aroostook County may not return to work until thoroughly screened by his or her supervisor, using an agency-wide screening checklist based on CDC guidelines.
- No delivery personnel are allowed into facilities.
- All outings into the community are cancelled.
- Group activities within facilities are cancelled.
- No groups of 10 or more are allowed to gather, including for meals.
- Staff, agency-wide, are being screened at the start of each shift. If symptomatic, the staff member will not be allowed to work. Temperatures are being taken. Work-at-home accommodations are being made when appropriate.
- All residents, clients and consumers are also being screened every day.
- All staff and residents must practice social distancing at all times.
- Proper hand hygiene is being monitored and enforced, with signs and posters as additional reminders. Handwashing with soap is preferred when possible.
- Sanitizing is occurring after each visitor leaves, with housekeeping staff and janitors paying particular attention to hard surfaces that are often touched, such as doorknobs.
- Residents of Mercy Home's residential wing can no longer mingle with residents of its nursing home.
- All meetings, agency-wide, are conducted via phone whenever possible. If a meeting must take place, it will be in that facility's most contained room.
- Job interviews can no longer include more than three people, allowing for just the potential employee and no more than two interviewers.
- Residential referrals from downstate for Franciscan Home are being screened.
- Supplies are reviewed every day, with staff and administration putting in extra effort to monitor for Mercy Home, which has special needs, such as Personal Protective Equipment.
- Skype is being utilized for residents to speak to their loved ones, and Go To Meeting is used as an online alternative to in-person meetings agency-wide.
- Administration has been making homemade sanitizer when needed, following CDC guidelines, for staff and their clients.
- If staff must enter a client's home to provide services, the service recipients will be screened for fever, as well as all people entering the home when the service is provided.

“Social distancing is an effective approach, but it can cause some inconveniences, which we will have to adapt to” Labrie said. “It’s not business as usual, and it may not be for weeks or months.”

Northern Maine General is a nonprofit social services organization serving Aroostook County, with business offices in Eagle Lake and Caribou. Founded in 1907, NMG provides long-term care, rehabilitation, home and community supports, behavioral health services, target case management, and consultation services and resources. Contracted services include subsidized apartments.