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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Mercy Home again welcoming indoor visitors

EAGLE LAKE, Maine (Feb. 24, 2021) – Multi-Level Administrator Denise Raymond, who oversees Mercy Home, sent good news today to residents and their families, announcing the return of indoor visitation and other positive developments relating to Aroostook County’s “low” positivity rate for COVID-19. The letter follows in its entirety:

Feb. 24, 2021

Family/Friends/Representatives of Our Residents,

I am writing you today to maintain communication regarding changes with COVID-19 guidelines and how we are implementing these changes. Recently our regulatory agencies have issued updated guidelines regarding new interpretation of the county positivity rate. The new interpretation placed Aroostook County in the “low” positivity rate. The “low” positivity rate allows us more opportunities with our facility:

- 1) We can offer **Indoor Visitation** at our visitor center. Effective 2/25/21, we will have opportunities to schedule indoor visits in the same manner that we have done in the past. Please contact the Mercy Home Clerk at 444-5152 to coordinate your visits. As we are moving into this phase, we do have limited visitation slots but we hope to expand on the opportunities based on requests for indoor visits.
- 2) **Volunteers** are allowed to come back into the facility. They are subject to the same requirements of staff which include COVID-19 screening upon entrance and COVID-19 testing routinely. We are slowly starting this process and have had one local group enter

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.

the facility to facilitate activities on two different days. Next week, we have a religious group scheduled to come in on Thursday morning and we are currently working with a second religious group to restart their services.

- 3) **Communal Dining** has started back in our large Day Room. Our residents are all seated at their own tables, which are 6 feet apart from one another. We do have two tables that have shields on them that allow for two residents to sit apart from one another. We are offering two different dining times for each meal to help with promoting social distancing.
- 4) **Essential Medical Visits** continue to be coordinated. We are promoting more external appointments to increase out-of-facility opportunities.
- 5) **Group Activities** can be facilitated for residents who are fully recovered from COVID-19 (all of our residents) and for those not in isolation or observation for COVID-19. Physical distancing among residents, like Communal Dining, is necessary. Hand hygiene and use of face coverings apply. When residents are out of their rooms, we are encouraging them to wear face masks.
- 6) **Day Activities** can be offered for residents who may be attending another program if the provider is in compliance with COVID-19 guidelines.
- 7) **COVID-19 Screening** continues to apply in all instances for anyone entering the facility. Staff are asked to get screened two times throughout their shifts. Staff who exhibit COVID symptoms are excused from work for a minimum of 10 days. Residents continue to be screened two times per day. Residents who exhibit COVID symptoms are placed into quarantine.
- 8) **Source Control**, also known as face coverings, is required for all staff, visitors, contractors and volunteers. We are promoting the use of surgical masks.
- 9) **Admissions** are taking place as they had prior to our Outbreak. Referrals are reviewed and encouraged to receive a COVID-19 test 24 hours prior to admission. They are admitted onto our COVID Unit to isolate until they receive a second COVID-19 test with negative results. Then, they are moved into a private room to quarantine. Staff enter these rooms wearing full personal protective equipment (gowns, respirators/masks, eye protection and gloves). Residents remain in their own room for 14 days before they can engage in group activities, communal dining or any other out-of-room occurrences.
- 10) **Baseline Testing** for COVID-19 continues to take place routinely. At this time, due to the “low” positivity rate, staff and volunteers, are tested every two weeks.

We would like to remind you, there are also other ways in which Mercy Home is offering you the opportunity to spend time with your loved one. We have the option of closed window visits (we recommend the visitor bring a cellular phone to use to call the resident to enhance communication), we have the use of the resident cordless phones, and we have the use of a tablet to have video visits. If you are interested in scheduling an inside visit, window visit, or video visit, please call the Mercy Home Clerk at 444-5152, ext 206.

Mercy Home has worked hard at following through with all of the recommendations set forth in an effort to keep our residents and staff healthy; we appreciate your patience and understanding of these guidelines set forth by our regulatory agencies.

We are unsure of how long precautions will be recommended; therefore, we are also updating the Northern Maine General Facebook page as changes occur. You can find us on Facebook as Northern Maine General. We encourage you to call with any questions.

Again, we understand the importance of visits to our residents; it is our responsibility to be sure your loved ones remain as healthy as possible through this serious virus and greatly appreciate your patience and understanding.

Sincerely,

Denise Raymond

Administrator

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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, case management, and consultation services and resources. Contracted services include subsidized apartments.