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## **NMG taking steps to protect residents and staff of Waiver homes**

**EAGLE LAKE, Maine (Sept. 13, 2021)** – Northern Maine General CEO Michelle Raymond issued a letter on Friday, Sept. 10, to stakeholders of the agency’s waiver homes, informing them of changes resulting from high community transmission of COVID-19. Waiver homes are residences that receive MaineCare funding through the state’s Home and Community Based Services waiver programs for people with disabilities and older adults.

The letter follows in its entirety:

*“In response to the surge in confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Aroostook County, particularly in our residential service area, Northern Maine General is taking several steps to protect its staff, residents, consumers and community.*

*To help reduce the risk of exposure and maintain personal safety, I am asking that we practice social distancing, wear masks, complete frequent hand hygiene, and seriously consider getting vaccinated, if medically able and have not already done so. In light of that, the following temporary requests of our consumers/residents/families and other stakeholders are being made:*

- *Restrict all non-essential community outings and leaves of absences. Residents/staff are required to wear a mask inside all settings. If all residents are vaccinated, they aren’t required to mask inside their home/residence, unless they are experiencing symptoms and or are asked to quarantine based on contact. Consumers/residents will be encouraged to complete a safety risk assessment with their support team, as needed, to*

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***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.***

*identify ways they can continue to meet their needs/wishes, while reducing risk to themselves and their housemates and staff.*

- *All meetings/visits with outside stakeholders should take place through video or phone conferencing or other socially distant means. Please reduce all in-person visits with families, friends, clergy, case managers, etc., in our residential and community support settings as much as feasible. If a visit, such as compassionate care, is absolutely necessary, please contact the facility supervisor in advance to problem-solve safe options available.*
- *Residents/family/friends are encouraged to stay connected via telephone, social media, videoconferencing, letters/cards, etc. If you need help coordinating any of these options, please reach out for assistance.*
- *If an in-person visit absolutely needs to take place, all visitors MUST wear a mask and remain socially distant. The facility Supervisor will assist you in coordinating the visit and determining the most protected manner and location. For example, you may be asked to hold an outdoor visit. As usual, all visitors and residents will be pre-screened for signs of Covid related symptoms. If the visitor or resident has Covid-19 symptoms, or has been in close contact with a Covid positive person, we will ask the visitor to reschedule or to make use of another means to connect (such as video calls or telephone).*
- *Any resident/consumer who has symptoms and/or who has come into close contact with a positive Covid-19 case and/or has a confirmed Covid test will be expected to quarantine or isolate for 14 days, per CDC guidance.*

*While this is not ideal, the safety of our residents and staff is too precious for us not to engage these protocols. We will alert you as soon as possible once the community spread data improves. NMG will continue to provide updates using our facebook page, (<https://www.facebook.com/NMGeneral/>) our website (<http://nmgeneral.org/newsevents/>), and through written notices.*

*I thank you for your assistance in co-managing this serious public health crisis, and I encourage you to contact the facility managers, coordinators, or myself any time you have questions.”*

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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.*