



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR MIKE DUNLEAVY

Department of Health and Social Services

ALASKA PIONEER HOMES
Director's Office

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March 12, 2020

RE: Coronavirus COVID – 19 Precautions Implemented

Dear Alaska Pioneer Homes' elders, families, friends, and volunteers,

The Alaska Pioneer Homes continue to monitor all updates for the coronavirus (COVID-19) and are following all recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Department of Public Health. While details about COVID-19 are still emerging, the CDC has determined that older adults and individuals with serious chronic medical issues are at higher risk for severe illness. While there are currently NO confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Alaska, concerns about a potential coronavirus outbreak means that it is critical that we take infection control precautions now. The Pioneer Homes are working very hard to prevent this virus from entering the homes in order to protect the health of the elders.

There is a risk that people who appear healthy could be carriers of the coronavirus. Carriers of the virus could enter homes and unintentionally infect residents. Studies of past viral epidemics show that frequent hand washing and limiting interactions with each other can limit the spread of the virus. Implementing these precautions before cases emerge is more effective than implementing precautions after community spread occurs.

Because of our concern for the residents of the homes, their loved ones, and the surrounding communities, we have now begun implementing further infection control precautions. Pioneer Homes will now be screening all visitors and limiting visitation hours. This will include health screening, signing-in when visiting, and asking everyone to wash hands prior to entering. We will be asking people to use a hand sanitizer that has at least 70% alcohol or to wash with soap and water as these are the only approved products from the FDA, see CDC recommendations cited below. Large activities will also start to be restricted in the homes. The homes will continue to follow all recommendations from Public Health as the spread of COVID-19 enters the state. These recommendations are likely to change over time, and we will continue to provide updates as the recommendations change.

We hope this explains why we are asking people to limit their visits. This may prevent you from physically seeing your family member or friend. Please work with the home's staff to develop ways of continuing contact, such as phone calls, Facetime, and Skype. Our residents' health and safety is our top concern. We are committed to doing everything we can to protect them, while still maintaining important contacts and activities. Please help us protect the health of the elders in the homes by not visiting when you have a fever, cough, or generally do not feel well.

For more information on the coronavirus, please refer to the following websites:

- State of Alaska Public Health website-
<http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Epi/id/Pages/Human-Coronavirus.aspx>

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- Centers for Disease Control website –
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>
<https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/index.html>

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Heidi Hamilton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Heidi Hamilton,
Advance Practice Registered Nurse II