



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR MIKE DUNLEAVY

Department of
Health and Social Services

ALASKA PIONEER HOMES
Director's Office

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March 17, 2020

Residents, Families, Friends and Visitors:

I am writing to provide further updates regarding COVID-19 and its impacts on the Alaska Pioneer Homes. We will be taking additional precautions at the Pioneer Homes beginning Tuesday, March 17.

As you know, recommendations to decrease the spread of COVID-19 have been changing on a daily basis. At the end of last week the State of Alaska made the hard decision to close state long-term care facilities to visitors. Because the state administration understands how important relationships are, especially to the residents of the Pioneer Homes, the decision was made to continue visitation in a limited manner.

Over the weekend and today, city, state and national agencies have put additional precautions in place to protect older adults, to include limiting all visitation in group homes.

As heartbreaking as this is, I feel that the Alaska Pioneer Homes must also put this limitation in place. The risk to the residents' health is just too great to not take all possible precautions.

Beginning on Tuesday, March 17, at 6 p.m., each of the six Pioneer Homes will be closed to all visitors, including family. Each of the homes will be developing individual resident plans to help residents maintain contact with loved ones through other means. Each home has different capabilities regarding internet services, iPad availability, and Skype/Facetime abilities. Please reach out to the homes to set up a plan that will work for you.

There will be no limitations for residents leaving the home, although the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that older adults limit close contact with others and to avoid crowds. I am hoping that the residents will follow these recommendations along with washing hands frequently, especially when returning to the homes. Upon return, residents will be screened for signs of illness and risk of exposure while out.

It is unknown how long these precautions will remain in place; I will continue to make decisions based on the recommendations of the CDC and Alaska Division of Public Health. I will also continue to keep everyone informed about how COVID-19 is impacting the Alaska Pioneer Homes.

Please reach out to myself or to your Pioneer Home with any questions or suggestions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Heidi Hamilton".

Heidi Hamilton, ANP
APRNII