

Frequently Asked Questions: Coronavirus Response Efforts at A.G. Rhodes

As of June 1, 2020

How does the Governor's recent announcement about the Public Health State of Emergency extension impact A.G. Rhodes?

On May 28, Governor Kemp extended the Public Health State of Emergency in Georgia to July 12, and this extension applies to the provisions currently in place to protect the medically fragile and senior population. **In accordance with the Governor's order, we will continue to restrict all non-essential visitors, including family members, until at least July 12.** We will closely follow further guidance, recommendations and requirements issued by the Governor and/or other officials as we near that date.

We know it is incredibly difficult for families and friends to be physically separated from their loved ones at A.G. Rhodes, but we must continue implementing stringent measures to protect the health and safety of the at-risk elders we serve. There are still many uncertainties about when we can reopen and the protocols of reopening long-term care facilities to visitors, but we are planning for a variety of scenarios and we will continue communicating with family members and others as we have more details. We are eager for the day when we can allow visitors so that families and friends can reunite with loved ones, but we must wait until it is safe and we are permitted to do so.

What will it be like once visitors are allowed back at A.G. Rhodes?

Visitors—including family members—are still restricted from visiting and there are still many uncertainties about the re-opening of long-term care facilities to visitors. We are planning for a variety of different scenarios once it is safe and we are cleared to allow visitors. We anticipate there will be significant changes to our visitor protocols, and we will be sure to communicate those as we have more details.

Does A.G. Rhodes have confirmed cases of COVID-19?

While all three of our locations had residents and staff test positive for COVID-19, most have recovered. Many residents are no longer considered positive for the virus, and some have even discharged home or to a lower level of care. See our confirmed cases document at www.agrhodes.org/coronavirus for information on the total cumulative number of COVID-19 cases as well as a much lower number reflecting those who are presumed or confirmed to still be positive.

Can you give us specific information about who has tested positive for COVID-19?

We know this is incredibly stressful and worrisome, and you have many concerns and questions about your loved one's risk of contracting COVID-19 based on potential exposure to someone who tests positive. We've received many questions asking for specific details about who has tested positive and who they've come in contact with. These are understandable questions, but to protect the privacy of residents and staff, and in accordance with Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) regulations, we cannot disclose the names of individuals who test positive, or other details that would identify them.

Given the highly infectious nature of this virus, we must operate on the assumption that every resident and staff member could have potentially been exposed to COVID-19. This is why we have such stringent measures in place including employee screening, and multiple temperature checks and assessments on each resident every day, among other measures outlined in this FAQs.

Are more cases expected to emerge?

COVID-19 is highly infectious and while our cumulative number of confirmed cases has slowed and many have recovered, we are still prepared as if more cases will emerge. To date, we've tested all our residents and we are retesting some. We will continue communicating with family members of those tested.

What are you doing to stop the spread?

There were many measures in place in our communities to stop the spread of this virus before positive COVID-19 cases emerged. In addition to visitor restriction—which has been in place since March 12—additional measures include:

Infection Prevention & Control. We continue to implement stringent infection prevention and control measures, frequent hand washing and cleaning of our buildings and surfaces, and extra precaution when caring for residents, especially residents exhibiting any symptoms of illness regardless of the nature of those symptoms.

Screening. We screen all staff and essential personnel who enter our buildings, including temperature checks. If someone's temperature is elevated or if they display other symptoms, they are instructed to leave and follow up with their doctor.

Closely monitoring residents and isolating those exhibiting symptoms. Even before our first confirmed cases, we designated an area of in each of our three homes to closely monitor some residents for symptoms of COVID-19. This area allows us to more safely isolate residents who are at greater risk of testing positive for COVID-19.

Because of the highly infectious nature of this virus and that it impacts people so differently, we are closely monitoring all our residents for symptoms and we are conducting regular temperature checks and routine assessments. While we immediately move residents displaying symptoms to the designated areas to be isolated, we may also send residents immediately to the hospital depending on the severity of their symptoms.

Closely monitoring staff. Staff are instructed not to report to work if they are feeling ill, and if they report to work and do not pass the screening, they are immediately sent home and instructed to contact their doctor. If a staff member feels ill during their shift, they are instructed to immediately go home and contact their doctor. We follow Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines for evaluating when and if it is safe for a staff member to come back to work.

Social distancing. Prior to the confirmed COVID-19 cases and because of the highly infectious nature of COVID-19, we drastically changed our activities and communal events to align with social distancing guidance and directives from numerous organizations and agencies including the CDC, Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS), and Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH).

Additionally, we encourage our staff to continue practicing social distancing among each other and outside of work, and to share what they have learned with their friends and family members.

How are you treating people suspected of having COVID-19?

Any treatment is done in close coordination with the medical directors and attending physicians in our homes. As soon as someone begins exhibiting symptoms, they are moved to the designated area or sent to the hospital, depending on the severity of their symptoms. It's important to note that this virus has the potential to impact people very differently. Some people develop milder symptoms, while some develop very serious symptoms immediately without much warning. While we may be able to care for some people in our homes who test positive, some may need more acute care in a hospital setting.

Are all your residents and staff going to be tested?

Federal and state officials are urging that COVID-19 testing among nursing home residents and staff be prioritized. To date, all our residents have been tested for COVID-19. Additionally, at the direction of and in coordination with our medical directors, some residents are being retested and we expect additional retesting as access to testing continues to improve. We are taking a proactive approach with testing and we continue to monitor residents closely for symptoms of COVID-19. Many of our staff members have also been tested for COVID-19. At this time there are no mandates requiring that they get tested, however with an increased focus on the importance of testing in nursing homes, we are strongly encouraging all our staff to be proactive in getting tested.

Are your staff wearing masks?

Yes, and we follow CDC guidelines concerning masks and other personal protective equipment. In accordance with these guidelines, we update our processes as additional measures are identified that will help us better safeguard residents and staff.

I heard members of the Georgia National Guard are helping nursing homes in Georgia. Did they come to A.G. Rhodes? What did they do?

Governor Brian Kemp [announced](#) in early April that members of the Georgia National Guard were being deployed to assist long-term care health facilities with their COVID-19 response efforts. We accepted the National Guard's help and teams went to all our homes in April. These specially-trained infection control teams followed protocols of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the health department to decontaminate and disinfect areas of the building using a disinfectant process that incorporates a solution approved by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). [Click here](#) to read more about these efforts.

Additionally, in April several members of the Georgia National Guard brought COVID-19 tests to our Wesley Woods community so that more residents and staff could be tested. We continue communicating with family members whose loved ones are tested, including the results of their loved one's test. We appreciate the National Guard's assistance in our efforts to stop the spread of COVID-19.

Who are you providing information to concerning the number of cases you have at A.G. Rhodes?

In these unprecedented times, we have made concerted efforts to communicate as transparently and frequently as possible with our residents, families, staff and others in the community. We are emailing and texting families regularly, and updating our website, including the numbers of confirmed COVID-19 cases in our homes. This information is also reported as required to organizations such as the Georgia DPH, the Georgia Department of Community Health (DCH), CMS and the CDC. In the interest of transparency, and to comply with required reporting mandates, we will continue communicating with our stakeholders.

How many deaths have resulted from COVID-19 at A.G. Rhodes?

First and foremost, our heartfelt condolences are extended to the loved ones of residents who have passed away, and to all those who have been impacted by this virus. We know this is an extremely difficult time, and our sympathies are with you.

In our efforts to communicate transparently and to address questions we have received concerning resident deaths and COVID-19, we have included additional information on the confirmed cases document that we are updating regularly at www.agrhodes.org/coronavirus.

It's important to note that someone asymptomatic may have tested positive for the virus, yet have serious unrelated and underlying health conditions. While there could be many factors involved, A.G. Rhodes—like

other nursing home providers—does not determine cause of death and the information we make available in the updated confirmed cases document reflects that.

How can I help?

We've had many requests from the community asking how they can help support our residents during this challenging time. To see some ideas, visit www.agrhodes.org/ways-to-help. If you have ideas that you'd like to share, email waystohelp@agrholders.org.

What else?

We know that this is an incredibly challenging time and you have many concerns and fears about loved ones staying in our communities. We assure you that we are doing everything we can to keep residents and staff safe. This virus presents many unique challenges, but we have well-trained and dedicated teams that are taking every feasible measure to stop its spread.

Please continue following our updates at www.agrhodes.org/coronavirus.

I have more questions, who do I contact?

Families with questions should use the contact methods on our "For Families" section of this webpage, www.agrhodes.org/coronavirus.

Members of the media should contact Mary Newton, Chief Communications Officer, at mnewton@agrholders.org.

If the methods above don't apply to you, please use our [Contact Us Form](#).