



Zachary S. Gray
Alta Skilled Nursing and Rehab
555 Hammill Ln.
Reno, NV 89511
P: (775) 828-5600, ext 2608
Email: zachary.gray@altanursingandrehab.com

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Subject: Facility visitation and COVID strategic plan

Dear Residents and Families:

First off, I would like to thank all of you for your assistance and understanding during these difficult times. The last 6 months have been difficult on all of us -- residents, family members, and the staff at Alta. Everyone has done a tremendous job of working together to keep the residents of Alta safe. THANK YOU.

On 9/17/2020, CMS released a memo, "Nursing Home Visitation - COVID-19." This memo addresses visitation in nursing homes. It is available on our website at www.altanursingandrehab.com, under the COVID-19 link. This letter to families and residents is to address how Alta management is interpreting this letter, modifying their visitation policy and outlining Alta's current visitation policy. The letter will go on to discuss long-term plans and the current strategy of the facility.

As of 9/10/2020, the positivity rate in Washoe County according to the CDC and CMS was 8.7%, putting Washoe County in a Yellow zone. The CDC and CMS release new county positivity rates weekly. Alta Skilled Nursing Facility has not had a positive case in 14 days. Every Monday morning, Alta tests all of their approximately 190 staff; there is a high probability each week that one of our staff will test positive due to the large number of staff we have, the weekly testing, and the high positivity rate in the county. If at any time there is a spike in cases in the county, resulting in a positivity rate >10%, or an outbreak in the building (defined as 1 case) compassionate care visits may be cancelled.

In order to maintain a safe, sustainable visitor policy, we have hired two full-time coordinators. Alta will be allowing supervised visits, 30 minutes at a time, between 10AM and 3PM, Monday through Friday. Visits are strongly suggested to occur outside. However, for those residents who are bedfast, or unable to comfortably go outside, we will be making accommodations on a case-by-case basis. We will continue to call these visits "compassionate care visits." They will be conducted first on the basis of how long it has been since a family member or friend last visited, and then on a first scheduled, first serve basis. Our goal is for everyone who wants to visit the building to be able to visit at least once per week. If demand is high, we will hire additional coordinators. Prior to the visit visitors will be given a healthcare

questionnaire and a temperature check, which they must complete without a “red flag” issue for the visit to continue. The primary steps in this questionnaire will be making sure that the visitor does not have a temperature (above 99.5), been exposed to someone with COVID within the last 14 days or traveled out of state within the last 14 days.

We continue to ask that family members and friends schedule all visits.

To schedule a compassionate care visit with your loved one, please call the main front desk at (775) 828-5600 or (775) 842-3835. If the visitation schedule is full, we will be able to tell you what the next available visitation time is.

As a reminder FACE MASKS MUST BE WORN AT ALL TIMES WHILE ON THE FACILITY PROPERTY. When you arrive, please check in immediately at the front desk, sanitize your hands, have your temperature recorded by the receptionist and fill out the facility symptom questionnaire. If you have a coffee, or snack, we ask that you drink and eat it prior to your visit. If you use the bathroom while on campus, please wear your facemasks during that activity. Failure to comply with the social distancing and facemasks policy will result in us restricting access to the property.

Other updates are in the remainder of this letter related to Alta’s COVID-19 strategies, as well as long-term plans.

Please feel free to contact me, the Administrator and Owner, at any time with questions at zachary.gray@altanursingandrehab.com or (518) 852-3255.

TESTING

The testing situation is far from perfect, primarily due to a lack of supplies and a backlog in the supply chain. Currently Alta is testing our staff every Monday and sending the testing results to UNR lab. Results are typically received back within 48-72 hours. It is our understanding that UNR has a grant to continue to provide this testing until December, at that point, there is a bit of a testing cliff, and to the best of our knowledge no other lab can reasonably service testing requirements of this volume. Additionally, the UNR testing is free (the government provided a grant). The only labs that offer Molecular testing to Alta charge \$220 per test and \$80 per test, respectively. At the low end, paying for molecular testing for Alta staff would cost \$15,200/week. At the high end it would cost \$41,800/week. It is our hope the government grants for testing are extended, or supplies are made available to our facility so we can do testing on-site. Paying either of these amounts is not sustainable financially for Alta (or any other Skilled Nursing Facility or Assisted Living).

Alta was recently (9/17/2020) approved to use an Antigen testing machine at the facility. In addition to being a Skilled Nursing Facility, Alta also has a laboratory license. This license is not typically used for items other than glucose monitoring and PT/INR monitoring in SNF’s, however, we are taking extraordinary steps to build out Alta’s lab capabilities, including COVID testing. In addition to the Antigen testing machine, which has an 88% accuracy rate, Alta has purchased a Molecular testing machine. These machines are not the equivalent of major labs; they are smaller, and not intended for mass volume. The Antigen machine is only FDA approved for emergency use, and for individuals with active symptoms. Additionally, the Antigen testing supplies are currently on back order. The Molecular testing machine, ordered in early July, is also on backorder (the machine itself has not arrived). We do not know exactly when the machines, nor supplies will arrive.

In regards to testing visitors, it is our eventual goal to offer this service. Testing visitors would allow use to further loosen restrictions relative to visitation, and we believe this intervention will be possible in the short-term future.

COVID-19 AVOIDANCE PROJECTS

Since the start of COVID-19, Alta management has been researching best practices to reduce the likelihood of COVID entering the building or spreading if/when it does enter the building. These are the specific projects that have been completed, or are in the process of being completed:

1) HVAC system upgrade

At the start of COVID, numerous public health professionals identified that in certain circumstances, the virus becomes airborne. Examples of this include the well known and publicized case where one choir singer infected 32 others out of 61 total choir members (<https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6919e6.htm>). Some commercial office buildings shut off the HVAC units for shared offices and shared office spaces. At Alta, this is not feasible. The temperature of a SNF must be kept between 75-85 degrees. Additionally, there are a tremendous number of HVAC units at Alta; approximately 100 PTAC units for resident rooms and offices, 24 split duct systems, 8 rooftop units and 1 ground unit that service the building. However almost all the bathrooms and hallways are serviced by the 8 rooftop units. Those units are going to be replaced with new units that have a built in Ion technology that may help to kill the virus (<https://globalplasmasolutions.com/>). All of the units servicing the hallways and resident bathrooms are going to have new thermostats installed that will allow the facility to better monitor air pressure in the rooms and bathrooms; helping to create negative pressure in certain areas so that residents' room air is not going into the hallway.

This project costs in excess of \$200,000 and is scheduled to be completed in the Fall of 2020.

2) Patio installation

It is our goal that family visitation happen as frequently as possible. Every day if the resident family and resident want it to. However, despite our best efforts and brainstorming, we continue to struggle with designing a safe way for this to happen inside. We are able to conduct safe visits outside. Currently, there is not a large scale area outside to conduct visits; this is a significant constraint.. We have engaged an architect and received an estimated bid on establishing a very large outdoor patio in the back of the building, extending throughout nearly all of the grass areas. This would be for resident and family visitation, relatively unrestricted and in mass. Unfortunately, due to the temperature constraints of working with concrete outside, this will not be complete until Spring of 2021. At that time, we will be able to drastically alter the way our visitation schedule is structured.

This project costs in excess of \$150,000 and is scheduled to be completed in Spring of 2021.

3) UVC Disinfection devices

At the start of the pandemic, our infection control team identified that keys, phones, and masks are major areas for possible transmission of the virus. At that time, they identified a UVC disinfectant product. Alta purchased 30 of these disinfectant devices and made them available to all staff, in every department. Examples of what we purchased can be found here:

<https://healthelighting.com/products/health-tote>.

Nearly\$ 6,000 was spent on UVC disinfection devices.

4) HEPA air filters

HEPA air filters do not filter out the virus. The virus is smaller than the filters. However, there is some scientific studies that a small portion of virus in the air can be captured by HEPA air filters. We ordered 3 commercial grade HEPA air filters in March, and 2 smaller style filters for the community bathrooms. Unfortunately, the commercial style filters have been on backorder since March and only one of three has arrived. The residential grade HEPA air filters arrived. These devices, although of questionable use in preventing COVID, have been helpful with the fires and reducing smells.

Nearly \$4,000 was spent on air filtration devices.

5) Heat Lamps and Tables

It was our hope that the major challenges surrounding visitation would be resolved prior to the Fall/Winter. Since they have not, we will be purchasing tables and heat lamps to improve the quality of outdoor visitation in the winter. One station will be set-up out front, and one in the back of the building.

This will cost approximately \$5,000.

6) Tablets and Communication Devices

Alta had two tablets at the start of the pandemic. At this time, the telecommunications and compassionate care team has access to over a dozen tablets and a smartphone to facilitate digital communication.

Nearly \$5,000 has been spent on digital hardware and software upgrade to facilitate digital visitation.

7) Laboratory improvements

It has become abundantly clear that in the long-term, Alta will need to provide significantly more laboratory style services than we have in the past. Although this sounds simple, this requires a dedicated laboratory area (a room) with laboratory equipment and sterile capabilities. The machines, and testing kits, are also expensive.

More than \$60,000 has been spent on laboratory equipment, the lab room build out and laboratory training. We anticipate spending substantially more money on the lab requirements with the ultimate goal of providing testing to visitors and contractors.

FAQ

1) Why aren't you allowing more indoor visitation?

- a. A large percentage of Alta's residents have a diagnosis of dementia and do not wear masks or comply with social distancing. They frequently wander around the hallways and common areas and engage in conversation and socialization. There is no way for us to restrict their behavior or to get them to wear masks, so it is nearly impossible for us to create a safe visitation area within the building.
- b. We are providing PPE to those visitors for indoor visits. There is still a significant shortage of PPE nationwide. Alta currently has enough PPE for staff, but no assurances that there will be enough in the coming months.
- c. We have not yet acquired a great deal of equipment needed to keep the facility safe at this time. Not only PPE is on backorder, HEPA filters, heat lamps, and other materials and equipment are also on back order. Lab testing kits for our COVID testing machine

are also on backorder. In some cases, items were ordered >6 months ago and have not yet arrived.

2) Can I come visit and go in my family members room?

Whether a visit is conducted indoors or outdoors will be determined on a case-by-case basis. Even in those resident rooms that are private, if the resident is capable of sitting outdoors, we will be doing outdoor visits.

3) Why are you only doing supervised visits?

Alta has been experimenting with different formats of compassionate care visits for months. It is challenging to have unsupervised visits for four main reasons; i) Getting residents to and from visits is difficult in a campus the size of Alta's, ii) many visitors are not familiar with the COVID social distancing policies, nor are they familiar with how to wear a mask or other PPE, iii) it saves the rest of the staff time if something is needed iv) the COVID screening requirements have put a significant burden on staff coverage, as many individuals are on tracking and off work at any given time.

4) What is the biggest challenge to the facility at this time?

The biggest challenge to the facility is staffing. Prior to COVID, if a staff member had a temperature, they typically would take tylenol and come to work. Today, a temperature usually results in 3-5 missed days of work. Prior to COVID, if someone travelled internationally, they'd miss 3-4 weeks of work. Now, they have an additional 2 week quarantine when they return. At any given time 5-15 staff members are out of work and on a symptom monitoring checklist.

5) I have never seen the building and want to see the inside. Can I see the inside?

Yes, you can see the inside of the building. We realize, the restricted visitation policy has given many family members an uncomfortable feeling relative to ,”what’s going on inside.” The goal of keeping people out is to limit the residents possible exposure to someone sick. However, if you haven’t seen the inside of the building ever, or it has been quite a long-time, please call the Administrator at extension 2608 and we will facilitate a brief tour to give you some reassurance that nothing untoward is going on inside; it is quite busy with people.

6) I have been told that window visits are prohibited. Is this true?

Window visits should be scheduled. Because Alta is a one story building, we have had numerous instances where window visits have resulted in residents complaining of people outside their room either while they are changing, or during other inopportune times. Because of the dignity related issues, we ask that you not window visit unless the compassionate care coordinators have approved (they will close the blinds adjacent to the room being visited, and help coordinate the visit).

7) When will things go back to normal?

We do not know. COVID is still relatively new, and we are adapting as quickly as possible. Certainly, the on-going resistance of people to wear masks in public is lengthening the duration and severity of the pandemic. If the positivity rate were much less (<5%), it would be helpful. However, it is difficult to adapt considering one COVID positive person without a mask could easily infect our entire community of residents.

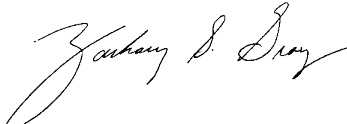
8) Will you be offering COVID testing to visitors?

We would like to be able to offer COVID testing to visitors, but this will be contingent on our access to the testing supplies, and the capability of our staff (they must be trained to use these machines and

licensed as office laboratory assistants). At this point, there appears to be significant backorders on the testing equipment, which makes our equipment more for emergency use than broad based utilization. However, we will continue to work to expand our capacity.

If you have additional questions, please forward them to us and we will answer them as openly and honestly as possible. It is our goal to minimize the impact COVID is having on you and your loved ones quality of life.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Zachary S. Gray". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Zachary S. Gray, NHA

Cc: Derek Castro, Facility Ombudsman &

Nevada, Division of Public and Behavioral Health