



Partners *on the* Journey

SPRING 2020
News about caring
for residents
with serious or
life-limiting illness

Precautions, Practices and Changes for **Collaborating with Agrace during COVID-19**

From Jennifer Malak, RN, MSN, Assistant Vice President of Homecare Operations

While you are working to keep your residents and staff safe from COVID-19, **Agrace is here to support you and collaborate with you.** We're balancing our patients' needs for specialized end-of-life care with the elevated risks of in-person contact so we can continue to fulfill our mission of compassionate care.

It is a highly challenging time to care for anyone who is at higher risk from this virus. Be assured Agrace will continue to carefully monitor the advice of the CDC, CMS, Wisconsin DHS and local public health departments and take precautions on behalf of your residents and staff.

We have made some changes to our normal routine, which are explained below. This information is current as of April 7.



*Jennifer Malak,
RN, MSN*

We continue to take new hospice patients, including COVID+ patients. If it is easier for you, please use our online hospice referral form at agrace.org/LTC. If you want to discuss a resident's condition before starting the referral process, call our Enrollment Team at **(800) 930-2770**.

Our staff are being screened twice every day for symptoms of COVID-19; employees with positive screens are removed from work immediately.

We are also calling ahead before each visit to your residents to screen them for COVID symptoms. If they have symptoms, we can work out a solution for providing care to them, which will include using appropriate personal protective equipment.

Limiting in-person visits to your site: We will respect your preferences for sending our staff to your site. We can limit our visits to only the medically necessary visits and will work with

you on alternate ways of making contact, such as "virtual" visits. We are using remote-visit technology, primarily the HIPAA-compliant Zoom, for this purpose.

Enrollment to hospice must still be done with an in-person physical assessment by an RN, but we are happy to provide the rest of our enrollment process virtually. We will work with each individual facility to minimize in-person contact for these visits, as appropriate.

Consider virtual visits: We are using Zoom to visit "virtually" for conversations and actions that don't require in-person contact. For example, our social worker may visit remotely while a nurse is there in person. Or nurses may do an in-person assessment and follow up with Zoom for medication reconciliation and education. To arrange virtual visits from Agrace, please work with our nurse or social worker who serves your site.

Continued on back →

CNA visits: To reduce in-person contact risks related to COVID, we have scaled back CNA visits. Please talk to the nurse who serves your site if you have questions about Agrace CNA visits.

Comfort medications: If comfort medications are requested for your facility, we will now be electronically prescribing to your preferred pharmacy. This new process increases efficiency. The orders will still be faxed to you but will look different than what you are used to seeing.

Inpatient care open: We continue to admit hospice patients needing short-term, acute care to our inpatient units (IPUs) in Janesville and Madison, including COVID+ patients. This may be preferable to a hospital stay in the current environment. As of April 7, we are allowing each patient one visitor/day, or more if they are at end of life—subject to visitors' COVID screening.

When hospice patients are transferred to Agrace for inpatient care, regardless of diagnosis and including COVID+ patients, we continue to have the goal of returning them home to you when they no longer require acute care.

Residential care paused: To keep more rooms open for acute care, we are temporarily not accepting new residential patients at our Madison and Janesville locations, except for Memory Care.

Memory care is still available: We are admitting patients to our 12 Hospice Memory Care Suites in Madison, either as residents or for short-term, acute (GIP) hospice care. Please contact us if you have a resident who needs additional support for memory care and is either in hospice care or may be eligible for hospice. (We are not taking COVID+ patients in the Suites.)

PalliaHealth Consults on hold: Based on guidance from both national and local health care authorities to suspend non-critical visits, routine PalliaHealth (palliative care) consultations and follow-up visits have been suspended until it is safe to resume

them. We have notified each patient's primary care provider of this change.

Volunteer roles paused: We have suspended volunteer assignments and hope to resume them as soon as it is safe for the volunteers, and for you and your residents.

Grief support is available by phone: Our spiritual & grief counselors are available to visit with patients or their family members by phone, and we're offering 1:1 phone grief-support visits to the community through the Agrace Grief Support Center at (608) 327-7110.

Reducing COVID Spread through AGPs

Aerosol-generating procedures (AGPs) may increase airborne transmission of COVID-19 virus. To improve safety, Agrace will avoid the use of AGPs—including nebulizers, suction devices, Bi-Pap and CPAP machines—for our patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 infection.

We recommend your residents with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 who are receiving an AGP be placed in airborne precautions, with caregivers wearing a fit-tested N95 mask. Additionally, consider inhalers to replace nebulized solutions.

Let Us Help You Through This Time

Please continue to refer patients to us, and talk with your Agrace team about your concerns. If you have urgent needs, call **(608) 276-4660**. Your call will be directed to our Triage Team for response 24/7.



2113 © 2020 Agrace



For more information, please contact your Agrace outreach liaison or email Ben.Johnsen@agrace.org
Referrals/Admissions: (800) 930-2770 | agrace.org/LTC

MADISON
5395 E. Cheryl Parkway

JANESVILLE
2901 N. Wright Road

BARABOO
1670 South Boulevard

PLATTEVILLE
1155 N. Elm Street, Suite 10