

TO: Families, Friends and Individuals Living in Vinfen Group Homes
FROM: Joseph Gomes, Senior Vice President
DATE: December 3, 2020
RE: Visitation Guideline Changes – Vinfen Homes and Family Home Visits

As we have been hearing every day on the news, Massachusetts, along with most other states in the US, are experiencing a significant surge in positive cases in COVID-19, and in some cases worse than in the Spring. States across the country are imposing new restrictions and rolling back their plans to lessen previously implemented restrictions. The Vinfen community is no different and we too are seeing an alarming increase in new positive cases across all our services, especially in the last three weeks. This is very concerning and despite our best efforts more staff and persons served continue to be exposed and test positive due to an increase community spread. In the past 9 months with increase in testing, implementation of best practices, education of staff and clients, and greater collaboration with families, DDS, Vnfen's Family Council and other stake holders we were able to effectively slow the spread of the COVID virus significantly. **Unfortunately, its time again to implement those restrictions and protocols that were so effective at the height of the pandemic to deal with the second surge which experts predict will be as bad or worse than the first.**

We recognize and understand how difficult it has been for families and friends to be apart from those that you love, especially during the holidays. These decisions are difficult but are motivated by an abundance of precaution to safeguard the health and wellness of our staff and those we support. These precautions were essential in the height of the pandemic to protect everyone's health and wellness and as we enter a second surge of COVID it continues to be necessary to follow the same best practices in order to ensure that the COVID 19 virus is contained and not spread among a very vulnerable population. As we begin the holiday season, we must be even more vigilant in protecting those who reside in our homes. We highly encourage staying home during the holiday season and celebrating by practicing other ways of staying connected with your loved ones.

As a follow up to the November 20th letter we have highlighted the changes and options for visiting with your family member below:

Family and Visitors Coming into Vinfen Homes: Due to the increase COVID positive cases we will be suspending visitors coming into Vinfen homes starting on **Tuesday, December 8th**. Staff have been directed to work with individual families to make alternative arrangements to ensure individuals continue to stay connected with family

and friends during these very challenging times. Please make sure to communicate with your family member's home so that we can support you and your family effectively.

Client Visits to Family Home(s): We highly encourage, in the interest of the health and safety of all residents that all visits to family homes **be suspended** until further notice. Starting on **Monday, December 14th**, anyone deciding to visit family or friends outside the group home, for any period, will be required to quarantine before returning to their home.

Subject to the following requirements:

- Quarantine in family home for at least 7 days and obtain a negative COVID before returning to their Vinfen home.
- If unable to obtain a negative COVID test individual must quarantine for 10 days in the family home before returning to their Vinfen home. Individual will then be required to isolate in their room and Vinfen will arrange for another COVID test to be administered after 72 hours.

Virtual Home Visits as an Option: We highly encourage family and friends to visit individuals virtually to safeguard everyone's health and wellness. Vinfen will make available a variety of options to facilitate your virtual visit, to include; Zoom, Facetime, Skype, WhatsApp, Teams, Google or work with each family to make special accommodations to ensure your visits are meaningful. It is in the interest of all residents and staff that we all commit to ensure that exposure to other community members is kept to a minimum; and thereby keeping everyone healthy and safe.

Outside Visits to The Group Home (Weather Permitting): We will continue to permit outside visits to the Vinfen's homes, weather permitting, and following previously established protocols; social distancing, mask wearing, etc.

For the safety of your family member/loved one or yourself; and the members of the community of people that live in Vinfen homes; we ask that you take the time to make the best decision possible for everyone involved. Please contact the Program Director at your family member's home for additional support and with any questions you may have regarding these guidelines. These guidelines may change in the future if the Governor imposes new restrictions or Vinfen determines that the safety of individuals and staff is at an elevated risk.

Thank you everyone and I wish you all a safe and healthy holiday season.