



Senior Living 100 Coronavirus Task Force Executive Summary – Call #6

COVID-Safe: Making Communities ‘Attractive’ to Residents AND Prospects

April 22, 2020

As cases start to flatten, senior living executives are strategizing about how to approach the next phase of the COVID pandemic. Building on experience gleaned over the last two months, operators are narrowing in on practices that must be mastered to persevere throughout the COVID era and beyond.

Featured Contributors:

Zehra Abid-Wood, Chief of Staff, Five Star Senior Living

Greg Joyce, CEO, Legacy Retirement Communities

Matthew Dunham, EVP, Frontier Management

Fee Stubblefield, CEO, The Springs Living

Clay Crosson, President & COO, Americare Senior Living

Mazy Sehrgosha, CEO, Premier Senior Living

Jesse Marinko, CEO, Phoenix Senior Living

Key Learnings:

Regulatory Guidelines

Zehra Abid-Wood (Five Star), in addition to other operators with facilities in multiple states, discussed the challenge in navigating the quickly evolving regulations/recommendations from the CDC, state and internal policies given their size and scope.

Staff & Education

Several operators noted a critical need to reduce the number of jobs their employees have, as multiple modes of employment may be a source of transmission. **Clay Crosson** (Americare) mentioned that employees in hotspot areas might have to pick a single employer. Providing employees with food or other resources may limit community interaction and reduce exposure to infection. **Jesse Marinko** (Phoenix Senior Living) complimented the CDC and Department of Public Health for providing them with resources and guidance, and expressed the need to continually educate staff with infection control protocols (hand washing and PPE); reaffirm safety mechanisms; and monitor staff-resident interaction.

Infection Control

Many operators believe that home health and hospice providers may be a source of the infection and measures need to be put in place to prevent transmission within the community. **Fee Stubblefield** (The Springs Living) said they assume everyone is COVID-positive, which allows communities to react quickly



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and adhere to infection control protocols. He also noted their droplet-suppression campaign called [Stop the Drop](#).

Converting AL to SNF

The [national CMS waiver](#) allows non-SNF buildings to be temporarily certified for treating COVID patients. **Clay Crosson** discussed how they are working with the state of Missouri to designate one of their assisted living facilities as an extension of their existing SNF and billing Medicare at a rate of \$500/day (compared to \$150/day).

Communication

Communication and transparency with staff, residents and family members remains imperative, but operators differed on whether to use a corporate or local voice. Hospital regulatory guidelines are also preventing quick notification of COVID-positive residents to the communities, and **Matthew Dunham** (Frontier) shared they are hearing about their residents' test results from family members instead.

Creating a Positive Perception

Consistent dialogue emerged about the hysteria and fear among staff stemming from misinformation reported by the media, as well as the tainted image of the senior housing industry. **Mazy Sehgosha** (Premier) shared his frustration with the disparity in recognition between hospital workers (heroes) and senior living staff (zeros). To combat this misperception, Mazy ordered **Heroes Work Here** banners to boost staff appreciation. Operators unanimously agreed on the need to educate the public about what senior living is and distinguish themselves from nursing facilities. Argentum and other local organizations are setting up websites and Facebook pages to clarify, refine and create a positive narrative.

Isolation

Isolating ambulatory memory care residents continues to be challenging. Zip walls and portable room dividers are two ways operators are containing and guiding residents within a specific area. We also heard the importance of telling residents that masks are being worn due to the flu – not Coronavirus.



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The Future

It was noted that the new normal – virtual offerings and masking staff – is not sustainable for the long term. **Zehra Abid-Wood** expressed a slow and gradual transition to reopening and emphasized the importance of technology as they move forward. There was also a great deal of trepidation on reopening and allowing visitors, but **Greg Joyce** (Legacy) has an optimistic outlook for the senior living industry as an attractive alternative to the home.

■ [Senior Living 100 COVID-19 Business Planning & Crisis Management Resources](#)

To receive an invitation to participate in task force calls, please contact:

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2020/2021 Conferences

HL

November 1-2, 2020

(NEW DATES)

Westin Chicago River North

Senior Care 360

December 9-10, 2020

(NEW DATES)

Gaylord Resort, MD

Senior Living 100

March 14-17, 2021

JW Marriott Miami Turnberry, FL