

PRESS RELEASE

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Contact: Kevin Prosser, Director of Marketing & PR

Tel: (315) 361-2196 | E-Mail: kjprosser@oneidahealth.org

Oneida Health Rehabilitation and Extended Care Remains COVID-19 Free

Oneida, NY – Recently, Oneida Health agreed to participate in a voluntary COVID-19 testing of their skilled nursing facility as part of a collaborative effort lead by Madison County and New York State health officials. The initiative was a result of growing concern related to the recent increase in the number of both COVID-19 positives and deaths occurring in skilled nursing facilities throughout the state.

Oneida Health, who has a 160-bed extended care and short-term rehabilitation center in Oneida, recently announced that their 134 residents and 207 staff members all tested negative for COVID-19. “We couldn’t be more proud of the negative testing result for our entire facility,” said Fred Scerbo, Oneida Health Rehabilitation Center and Extended Care Administrator. “To have no residents or staff test positive and remain a COVID-19 free facility during the pandemic is a testament of our commitment to the safety and care of our residents.”

Early in March, Oneida Health activated a strict no visitor response plan and implemented a daily Employee Symptom Monitoring Tracking System. The tracking system allows them to actively monitor all employees to determine their daily health status both when they arrive and when they leave. Screening includes checking an employee’s temperature twice daily and screening them for additional symptoms related to COVID-19. Any employee who has minor symptoms or an elevated temperature is asked to remain home as a safety precaution until their symptoms subside.

“Our employees recognized from the onset the importance of being diligent about their own health and practicing social distancing in order to keep COVID-19 out of our facility,” said Mr. Scerbo. “We also have a distinct advantage by being connected to the hospital. It has allowed us to adhere to strict infection control strategies and access to Protective Personal Equipment (PPE) that stand alone nursing homes may have difficulty attaining once the pandemic began.” Oneida Health skilled nursing employees routinely wear face masks, face shields, and gloves.

During the start of the pandemic, nursing homes were required by executive order to accept any resident even if they tested positive for COVID-19 prior to admission. To maintain a COVID-19 free environment Oneida Health established an isolation unit on their second floor with dedicated staff to test and monitor new residents for symptoms prior to introducing them to resident areas.



On May 10, the executive order was reversed and skilled nursing facilities are no longer required or permitted to accept COVID-19 positive residents. Mr. Scerbo indicated it is their plan to continue to use the isolation unit for the indefinite future as a means of continued precaution when accepting new residents. “With the current rate of false negative testing and asymptomatic COVID-19 positive patients, this proactive measure will continue to provide one more layer for keeping COVID-19 from being introduced to our resident community,” said Mr. Scerbo.

Other measures taken by Oneida Health during the COVID-19 pandemic which Mr. Scerbo credited to their success include adopting social distancing in their dining, activities, and transportation services as well as improved education and training for both staff and residents pertaining to infection control strategies. He also credited resident family members for their success.

“Our efforts to date would not be possible without the trust and cooperation we have received from our resident family members during this time,” said Mr. Scerbo. “Though this has been a challenging time for everyone involved, the sacrifices of the many has resulted in the health and safety of every one of our residents during this unprecedented time.”

The Oneida Health Rehabilitation and Extended Care is currently accepting new residents. For more information, please visit oneidahealth.org or call 315-361-2018.

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About Oneida Health

Oneida Health serves an area comprised of approximately 29 communities in Madison and western Oneida counties with a population of approximately 100,000. Operated by Oneida Health Systems, Inc, a New York State not-for-profit corporation, the organization includes a 101-bed acute care hospital, emergency department, state of the art surgery center, 160-bed extended-care and short-term rehab facility, primary care offices, internal medicine, comprehensive lab services, home medical equipment, comprehensive imaging services, outpatient therapy, and care specialties in: oncology, neurology, podiatry, vascular, sleep, OB/GYN, orthopedics, wound care, GI, and ENT. To learn more about Oneida Health, visit www.oneidahealth.org.