

# Staff Leader Q&A | April 3, 2020

## Theresa Thomas, Director of Environmental Services

*With a team of more than 75 staff serving GHA and GHBC, our Environmental Services (ES) Department serves a vital function in our infection precaution and planning efforts. We asked our Director of ES Theresa Thomas to respond to several questions about our infection precaution practices.*



### **Q. What procedures are in place for our laundry services to prevent viruses from spreading through bed linens, towels and residents' laundry?**

A. We operate as a commercial laundry service and are required to maintain a water temperature of 160 degrees, which disinfects against viruses, germs and blood borne pathogens. We can select various settings based on load size and soil intensity, and use an array of directly dispensed chemicals to address our needs. We follow guidelines for the proper mix of chemicals and water to control risks and meet our needs.

### **Q. How do you handle the laundry of residents who are not feeling well?**

A. Laundry of sick residents or residents in quarantine is collected differently. Residents under these conditions notify our staff so they can provide special bags for the laundry. These special bags alert laundry staff who will process the linen using designated cycles for these bags of laundry. We are also sanitizing our common area laundry rooms by running a bleach cycle at the end of day, and wiping down all machines regularly.

### **Q. What steps are you taking to practice social distancing and infection precaution when housekeepers clean residents' homes?**

A. We have informed our staff that it is appropriate to ask residents to move to a different room in the apartment while they are cleaning in order to help maintain social distancing. Many of our residents are leaving their apartment during their cleaning time to allow the housekeeper to move about freely.

*We are committed to keeping you, residents and staff healthy.  
Please join us in our efforts to keep our community infection-free.*



**Infection Precaution**

**Q. We have heard that the ES staff is doing “extra wipe downs” across the campuses. What exactly does that mean and where is this happening?**

A. Every hour, we wipe down all our high touch surfaces (elevator buttons, chair rails and counters). Although meeting rooms are limited in use, we are wiping down those areas daily, especially tables, counter tops and the arms of chairs.

**Q. Is there a difference between Housekeeping and Environmental Services?**

A. Environmental Services is all encompassing. It includes Housekeeping, and it shifts the focus to infection precaution by means of cleaning and sanitizing. Along with our clinical staff, we are responsible for limiting the spread of infection by maintaining health care industry standards of cleaning.

**Q. Does your staff have the materials needed to perform their jobs successfully during this unprecedented time?**

A. We are very fortunate. Our Goodwin House Supply Chain Department has been able to secure all our needed chemicals. I am involved with the Association for the Healthcare Environment through the American Hospital Association; they provide daily updates on processes and CDC guidelines for chemical usage. I am pleased that all our chemicals are on the approved list to fight COVID-19.

**Q. How is your staff feeling? How is staff morale?**

A. They understand the responsibility of their jobs and how important it is to keep our residents safe. They are still showing up every day, smiling and asking if there is anything else they can do to help our community. We are in this together... We are Environmental Services!

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