



SOUTH PORTLAND HOUSING AUTHORITY

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ME Relay – call 711

April 2, 2020

To: South Portland Housing Authority Residents

RE: Coronavirus Update

In an effort to assist people in managing the issues with the Coronavirus, including safe social distancing, not participating in group activities where you are closer than 6 feet to another person and to wash your hands frequently and avoid touching surfaces or your face, we wanted to communicate that at least one resident in one of our buildings has tested positive for the Coronavirus. They have been advised to quarantine themselves while their symptoms are being monitored by their physician and the Maine CDC.

We want to want to convey emphatically to all residents that an exposure to the virus and positive test results are very probable outcomes in our settings as the virus continues to spread quickly. The Maine CDC emphasizes that as long as residents are practicing recommended social distancing, hygiene and hand washing, that residents are no more likely to be exposed to COVIC-19 from other positive residents in their buildings, than they are for getting exposed from sources in the community such as grocery stores or pharmacies!

If a person has symptoms of the virus, they should call their physician and follow doctors' orders. Generally, if it is indicated that a person needs testing, your physician will conduct the test and recommend self-isolation. If the test comes back positive, your physician and the CDC will recommend full quarantine for a period of at least 14 days or until the symptoms no longer exists. If symptoms become more severe, your physician may recommend hospitalization. However, most initial steps taken by your physician and the CDC will support isolation and/or quarantine in your apartments until it is medically not indicated. What this means is that quarantined individuals need to have a backup plan for retrieving groceries and medications. Family, friends and neighbors can fill that role safely as they deliver groceries outside your door and not get close to any person inside. Delivery of food is deemed an essential service, but everyone needs to take extraordinary steps to avoid exposure.

The Maine CDC has stated emphatically, that everyone, whether they live near you or not, should be considered by each other as a possible source of the COVID-19 virus. Every surface you touch, everyone you come in contact with, every time you go food shopping, even the food bags and containers you purchase, the gas pumps you use, everything should be considered contaminated, even if they are not, requiring everyone to diligently protect themselves. Wash your hands, wear gloves to handle objects and isolate these objects for a few days until the virus has died on its own (usually at least 3 days but check with CDC). People passing each other in the hallways or elevators should make way for each other and should gently remind each other of social distancing. If you have business in the lobby or in laundry rooms such as mail pick up, conduct your business quickly and move on. Wait 6 feet away until others are done. Even mail should be considered as potentially carrying the virus.

Notices:

Starting immediately, no visitors are allowed into our buildings unless they are essential service providers such as in-home nursing and support, food delivery or emergency care. All entranceways are being posted with the latest restrictions regarding visitors. The restrictions have been ordered by the governor and the City of South Portland. This means that residents may no longer accept guests such as family, friends, children that they are not the parent, children being babysat, etc. Residents may have to leave the building to visit people in their homes instead. We are following these directives and ask for 100% compliance from residents.

SPHA will temporarily cease charging late fees for rent due through July 2020.

Rent continues to be due on the 1st of each month, and will be considered late if received after the 15th, however residents will not be charged a late fee during this time. In addition, we will not initiate evictions for non-payment of rent during this time. However, residents should continue to pay their rent in a timely manner, as rent is still owed and payable. SPHA will be forced to proceed with necessary legal action, including eviction, for late and unpaid rent and other charges still owed after July 2020. As always, if you have a decrease in household income, please provide our office with verification of the income change as soon as possible. We continue to review and process necessary rent adjustments consistent with our existing policies.

Friendly Reminders:

- Please do not post anything regarding our building site's response to the Coronavirus. Posting should be from SPHA only in order for us to be updated, consistent and thoughtful.
- Please use common sense and maintain social distancing. For example, only one person at a time should be in an elevator, unless medically necessary. Only one person should be in the laundry room at a time. Residents should always be sure to maintain a distance of 6 feet from one another. I have also observed

people smoking in groups out on sidewalks, smoking far too close to each other. You should be a minimum of six feet apart.

- Use latex gloves to push buttons if you have them, cough into your sleeve and don't rub against walls or rails. Use sanitizer on hands or better still, wash your hands in the nearest bathroom as you re-enter the buildings. I have observed residents not going to the nearest bathrooms upon entering, preferring to walk way down hallways and up elevators to their own apartment. That is not such a good thing to do as people can accidentally touch knobs, rails, doorways or anything on their way to their apartments.
- Please do your part, be serious about the safety of yourselves and others and take a minute to do extra. We all have time on our hands.
- I know that we are all inconvenienced with the community rooms and gathering places being closed. We could not think of taking the chance of leaving them open and the extra closings are consistent with most Housing Authority sites across the country and matches suggestions from the CDC. For now, safety is the most important consideration.

Thank you to all of our residents!

We also want to thank all residents of South Portland Housing Authority sites to say thank you for all of your efforts and generosity of spirit you have demonstrated during these difficult times. We have been informed of, and have witnessed firsthand, many acts of kindness between residents and it is heartwarming. It isn't easy to find ways to help others when, at the same time, you are making every effort to curtail the spread of the Coronavirus. It is unfortunate that the label "Social Distancing" was established as it really is more about "physical distancing" while people should be making every effort to remain very socially connected.

Stay safe and best wishes from SPHA!