Advance Care Planning and COVID-19:
Information for Residents and Families

What is COVID-19 and how does it affect senior living and nursing facility residents?
COVID-19 is a virus and, at this time, there is no vaccine to prevent a person from catching it. People with COVID-19 have reported a wide range of symptoms, from mild to very severe. Common symptoms include fever, cough, shortness of breath, and fatigue. Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after a person is exposed to the virus.

While anyone can have mild to severe symptoms, older adults and people who have severe underlying medical conditions like heart or lung disease or diabetes seem to be at higher risk for developing more serious complications from COVID-19 illness. Residents who are frailer and/or have advanced chronic health conditions will have a higher risk of death regardless of the type of treatment they receive.

Why is Advance Care Planning more important than ever?
Residents of senior living and nursing facilities are at high risk of getting COVID-19 and needing treatment and support. The more severe complications of COVID-19 require urgent decision making. Advance Care Planning is the process of talking about values, goals, and medical treatment preferences ahead of time. Advance Care Planning conversations can help prepare you for these decisions.

This is especially important if you prefer to avoid invasive life-prolonging treatment. Identifying your goals and writing them down will help make sure treatments are provided only when they align with your wishes.

What goals are most important to consider?
Understanding which goal is the most important to you can help you make decisions that reflect your values. Below is an overview of three general goals of care. What goal is most important to you right now?

- **To Live Longer**: Focusing on care most likely to help you live longer.
- **To Sustain My Current Health**: Focusing on care most likely to help you stay strong and do as much as possible independently.
- **To Focus on Comfort Care**: Focusing on care most likely to improve your comfort level and quality of life.

What can I do now to make sure my wishes are known?
1. Consider what you would want if you became serious ill.
2. Review or complete your Advance Directive documents, including naming your Power of Attorney for Health Care.
3. Talk about what matters most to you with your loved ones, your doctor, and other people you trust.