COVID-19 Guideline Statement
9-1-2021

The Mended Hearts, Inc. Board of Directors would like to thank the membership for their ongoing support during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our primary goal is, and has been, to protect our members, patients, medical professionals, and families and to comply with controlling guidelines. Since March 18, 2020, many of our in-person visiting, programs and events have been cancelled. We understand how difficult this has been for so many, and we appreciate our entire community coming together and dedicating their time to learning new ways to connect in furtherance of our mission.

Our organization has pivoted quickly and has been working to meet the emotional and educational needs of patients and families across the nation with our virtual visiting chapter and national programs. Virtual visiting is continuing to grow and we are continuing to deploy iPads into hospitals to enhance our support program. We urge all our chapters, groups, and members to use this program to continue to serve the patients and families in your area, regardless of ability to meet face-to-face. There are many advantages of having a virtual visiting program, including gaining new members, supporting more patients and families, and opening visiting to patients, caregivers and parents who were unable to visit in-person.

With those thoughts in mind, The Mended Hearts, Inc. Board of Directors is releasing guidelines for reopening in-person chapter, visiting, travel, and group programs ONLY where they follow national, state, local and hospital guidelines:

Know State, Local and Hospital Guidelines— MHI recommends at least one leader in your chapter or group should be designated to stay current with ALL state, local and hospital guidelines for any in-person events and in-person hospital visiting. The designee shall also follow all policy statements regarding COVID-19 from The Mended Hearts, Inc. This designee shall communicate the guidelines to the chapter or group leaders and notify all chapter or group leaders as soon as possible of any changes.

Follow State, Local and Hospital Guidelines— MHI recommends chapter or group leaders shall meet by telephone or video chat (ex. Zoom) to determine procedures for that chapter or group that comply with the state, local and hospital guidelines, and with The Mended Hearts, Inc. policies, including procedures for in-person chapter or group meetings and events and for in-person hospital visiting. Each time there is a change in guidelines from the state, hospital, or locality, chapter or group leaders shall make appropriate corresponding changes to its procedures.

Communicate Procedures—Chapter or group leaders shall clearly communicate procedures with chapter or group members and solicit feedback and questions.

Individual Rights—Each individual has the right to make decisions about his or her own safety and may decide not to participate in in-person chapter or group visiting programs, meetings, or events. However, no individual may violate chapter or group policies that are in compliance with state, local and hospital guidelines.

We serve a vulnerable population that has a higher risk of severe illness and complications from COVID-19, and we must protect everyone as best we can. The CDC recommends the following guidelines:

1. Use a proper-fitting mask (with some exceptions) in community settings when physical distancing cannot be maintained.
2. Practice physical distancing (six feet is the standard recommendation) to lower the risk of disease spread
3. Individuals need to follow healthy hygiene practices (washing hands, not touching your face, and cleaning surfaces regularly)
4. Stay at home when sick – This would include avoiding any events, group gathering or visiting if ill.

Nationally, in April 2021, the Mended Hearts staff returned to work in the Albany International Headquarters and Resource Center. The Albany office has been forced to temporarily close again due to spread of the virus in Albany, Georgia and for the safety of our staff.

Due to the disease spread in various locations throughout the country, MHI recommends maintaining our travel restrictions outside of your immediate area for Mended Hearts and Mended Little Hearts’ business. This will help avoid inadvertently transmitting the virus from community to community.