

**March 16, 2020****Immediate Release****Contact:** JoAnn Cavanaugh, Director Public Relations**Office:** (716) 706-2061 | **Cell:** (716) 228-4886 | **Email:** [jcav@chsbuffalo.org](mailto:jcav@chsbuffalo.org)

## **Catholic Health Implements “Virtual Visits” for Nursing Home Residents**

*iPads allow families to stay connected during period of restricted visitation*

Prior to Governor Cuomo’s directive last week to restrict visitors in nursing homes, Catholic Health was putting plans in place to protect patients and residents at its four nursing homes and one adult care community, including suspending visitation. At the same time, we understand how important visits with family and friends are to the well-being of our nursing home residents. Catholic Health leaders and nursing management, in conjunction with Catholic Health’s IT team, immediately looked at technology solutions that would enable virtual nursing home visits.

Nursing homes across the country are on high alert because of evidence of the considerable risk Coronavirus poses to the elderly population. “We know the virus seriously affects the elderly more than any other age group, so we believe these prudent measures need to be taken,” said Tom Gleason, Senior Vice President of Home & Community Based Care for Catholic Health. “And while everyone agrees this is the best thing to do for our residents and patients, it is incredibly difficult for families to be kept away from their loved ones.”

Because visitors are so important to the welfare of the elderly, Catholic Health came up with a plan to use iPads to offer virtual visits at its nursing homes, subacute rehabilitation facilities and adult care community. Over the past several days, Catholic Health purchased 20 iPads and quickly deployed them at its four long term and subacute care facilities – Father Baker Manor in Orchard Park, McAuley Residence in Tonawanda, Mercy Nursing Facility at OLV in Lackawanna, and St. Catherine Labouré Health Care Center in Buffalo – and St. Francis Park adult care community in Hamburg .

Staff at the facilities have been trained to use the iPads, along with Catholic Health’s video conferencing capabilities, to give nursing home, adult care residents and subacute rehabilitation patients the ability to have a video visit with their family members and loved ones.

“We are committed to protecting the health and safety of our residents, patients and staff but we understand this is a difficult situation for everyone involved,” Gleason added. “We’re working hard to ease the concerns of family members by providing them with regular updates and giving them the opportunity to stay engaged with their loved ones during this unprecedented situation. The iPads are a great way to help families keep connected until the visitor restrictions are lifted.”