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## **Effects of COVID-19**

The effects of COVID-19 have drastically affected the workplace here at Gerard as we had a campus outbreak with multiple residents testing positive for the COVID-19 virus. During this time, we secluded off a section of a dorm and had to move staff off dorms to supervise the residents. The staff who worked the COVID units had to dress in full PPE attire throughout the whole shift and sanitize anything that was used or touched by the youth. At times when residents were unsafe, they were placed in a physical intervention which caused the staff to be within close proximity of the residents that were positive with the virus. At times some of the residents who tested positive would begin to act out and spit at staff causing an unsafe situation for them. They would need to change out of the PPE gear, sanitize and put new gear on and return to the floor. We had multiple staff here at Nexus Gerard that tested positive for the virus and needed to quarantine for 2 weeks until they were symptom free. This caused many of the staff who did not test positive to have to work multiple hours to meet minimal ratio on the dorms. Many staff were working between 60-70+ hours per week to meet the minimum ratio on dorms. We had a handful of staff that ended up terminating their employment as they were fearing for the safety of their families and their selves due to the outbreak. During this time, frontline workers had an additional workload as they needed to tend to the needs of the kids in the sick unit and support the staff there along with sanitizing the units. This included sanitizing all daily used surfaces, walls, restrooms, handles, light switches, and washing or sanitizing fabric surfaces.

During this time, I tested positive with COVID-19 and needed to take 2 weeks off from work until I was symptom free. I had to continue to work on staffing the dorms and ensuring we are meeting ratio along with attending meetings from home. My wife who works at Nexus Gerard also had to take off work as I tested positive, and we live together. This created a hardship financially in our household as both of us needed to be home unpaid until we were able to receive an unemployment check for a week's worth of pay as this is all we could claim. This left us both with a week's worth of unpaid hours causing difficulties to meet deadlines with bills. During this time our child was not allowed to go to daycare as we tested positive and there was a risk of him transmitting it to the other kids. We had to take care of our 2-year-old child at home while trying to recover from the virus. We needed to also pay for the 2 weeks of childcare even though our child was not in daycare as it is set hours we pay. This caused more difficulties with making ends meet with bills. This pandemic has caused a lot of stress on many essential workers with the amount of hours we have had to put in over the last year all while trying to get moments of self care and time with family.