



The Beacon

A Newsletter for Nursing Home Residents

June 2020

The NJ Office of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman is an independent state agency whose sole mission is to advocate for the rights of residents of long-term care facilities. Our staff and volunteers are trained to help you receive the quality of care and quality of life you deserve. They are here to listen to your concerns and to work with you to solve any problems you may be having.

If you have a concern or complaint about your care or if you believe your rights are being violated, you can contact us at 1-877-582-6995. Calls are confidential, at your request. We currently cannot visit you in person but we will still do everything possible by phone (and other means) to help you.

The purpose of this newsletter is to keep you up-to-date with important information. If you have a topic you want us to cover in a future issue, please call us or email us at outreach@ltco.nj.gov with your idea.

Visits from Family and Friends

The Department of Health has provided guidance that will allow outdoor visitation for residents in LTC. Your facility must provide proof to the NJ DOH that the facility has the space, the staff and the personal protection equipment needed to accommodate outdoor visits.

Who is eligible

- If you are COVID-19 negative and have had no recent exposure to possible infection, you are **eligible** for outdoor visits.
- If you are suspected or confirmed to be infected currently with COVID-19 or you are in quarantine for a recent exposure to COVID-19 then you are **not eligible** for an outdoor visit at this time.
- If you have had or been exposed to COVID-19 but you have already been in quarantine for 10 days, have improved respiratory symptoms, and have been without a fever (without fever reducing medication) for 72 hours then you may be **eligible** for outdoor visits as defined in guidance from NJ DOH and CDC.

So even if you are not currently allowed outdoor visitors, you may be allowed in a few days or weeks, depending on your condition and how many days you do not have any symptoms.



Conditions for outdoor visitations:

- Two visitors at a time, of your choosing
- Masking and social distancing is required for all
- Visits occur in outdoor area designated by facility
- Visitors not allowed inside, cannot use restrooms
- Visitors will have temperature taken and be screened
- If you have a disability, adaptive equipment should be provided
- Informed consent from resident and visitor are required
- No food is allowed, visitors may bring their own water, packages can be left with reception
- May be cancelled due to inclement weather

Going Outside and Socializing (with Social Distancing)

If there are no active or suspected cases of COVID-19 in the facility, and you are accustomed to going outside, then you should still be allowed to go out to get fresh air, with social distancing.

Many residents have complained that they are required to keep their doors closed. There are some situations where doors must remain closed but generally you are permitted to keep your door open. Call us if this is a problem that you are experiencing.



Food Deliveries and Packages

The NJ Department of Health has stated that residents may order or have family/friends deliver food to them at the facility. Delivery personnel, family or friends will not be allowed inside, however.

You still have the right to receive mail and packages, unopened. You may wish to use your stimulus funds to order items online for delivery, for example. Your facility may briefly hold or wipe your package down on delivery, but there is currently no evidence that COVID-19 is spread through the mail.

Family Councils and Resident Councils

Family councils are groups of residents' family members and friends that advocate for the nursing home to improve quality of care. Resident councils are groups of nursing home residents coming together to discuss their issues and concerns. During COVID-19, family and resident councils can play a crucial role in maintaining quality of care in the facility.

If your facility does not have these groups, you can join with other families or other residents to start one. Contact your facility Activity Director or Social Worker to get started. If you encounter any difficulties, contact the LTCO at 1-877-582-6995 or visit theconsumervoice.org for guidance.



June is **PRIDE** month, the month of the year designated to celebrating lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI) people and their struggle for equality. Nursing homes should be welcoming places for all people, no matter how you identify or who you are attracted to. It is not okay for nursing home staff to make you feel bad for who you are. If you or other LGBTQI residents do not feel welcome, please reach out to us and we can work with you to help. Older LGBTQI people can also find great information and support at sage.org, gardenstateequality.org, or lgbtqseniorhousingandcare.com.



New Jersey Office of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman
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