



The Beacon

A Newsletter for Long-Term Care Residents

November 2020

Updated DOH Guidance for Visitation

On October 21st, the NJ Department of Health (DOH) updated the visitation rules for long-term care. Now, indoor visitation by appointment is permitted in every phase of reopening (Phases 0, 1, 2, and 3) as long as the facility has not had new COVID cases in the previous 14 days and is not testing for a suspected outbreak.



You can still ask to designate a family member or other caregiver as an Essential Caregiver. Under DOH guidelines, these Essential Caregivers can visit up to 1 or 2 times a week for up to 2 to 4 hours a week, depending on which Phase your facility is in. However, if there is an outbreak Essential Caregiver visits are prohibited, according to DOH.

Indoor visitors must always be screened and wear a mask. Visitors must also maintain social distance unless they are there for an approved “compassionate care” or an Essential Caregiver visit. A Compassionate Caregiver visit includes end-of-life and other situations where the resident has a serious change in health or psychological condition. Compassionate care visits are allowed in any Phase and even if the facility has new COVID cases in the past 14 days or if they are in an outbreak testing status. Facilities are also encouraged to continue outdoor visitation where weather permits.

Holiday Celebrations This Year



We know that celebrating holidays will be more challenging this year due to COVID-19. Unfortunately, COVID cases in the community are on the rise again. As such, the Department of Health (DOH) issued guidance on November 16 strongly recommending the residents not leave their long-term care communities during the holidays. The guidance states that residents who go out to celebrate holidays with family can be required to quarantine for 14 days upon their return.

The DOH is requiring long-term care facilities to separate and quarantine anyone who goes home for a holiday celebration. In addition, the DOH has advised that residents and families should expect that the facility may not be able to take the resident back right away if they lack adequate space or staff to properly quarantine everyone who leaves.

The DOH is recommending that facilities facilitate outdoor visits, where possible, and indoor visits in facilities that are not currently experiencing an outbreak. Talk to your Social Worker and your Activities Director about how they plan to help you celebrate your holidays this year in a creative and safe way.

Recreational Activities during COVID-19



Activities are an important part of quality of life in a nursing home and they should be designed to appeal to your interests and to enhance your physical, mental and psychosocial well-being. Activities have changed a lot in past years - moving away from just BINGO-type activities to a whole host of creative programs. We understand that due to COVID restrictions, activities may not be conducted in the same way as before.

However, you still have the right to receive recreational services in a safe way and for your preferences and suggestions to be considered. Some creative

examples of safe activities during the pandemic include: hallway bowling, virtual museum tours, live music concerts in the lawn/parking lot, mobile ice cream carts, scavenger hunts using magazines, in-room crafts, in-room “cold” cooking classes, pen pal programs, and many others.

Your facility should still have a robust program of activities that enhances your life, even if it is in a socially distanced way. If not, or if you do not like the activities offered, please let the Activities Director or the Resident Council President in your community know what activities you would like to see. Remember, activities should not just be limited to BINGO. Whatever interests you enjoyed in the broader community can be explored in the facility.



The LTCO gives a shout out to all of the activities professionals who are doing their best to reduce the social isolation of LTC residents during the COVID-19 health emergency. Pictured here, staff from Cedar Grove Respiratory and Nursing Center in Williamstown celebrate fall by delivering tasty treats and activities to their residents.



New Jersey Office of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman
www.NJ.GOV/LTCO Laurie Brewer, LTC Ombudsman

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