



The Beacon

A Newsletter for Long-Term Care Residents

December 2021

UNSCHEDULED VISITATION NOW OPEN FOR ALL RESIDENTS!

On Wednesday, November 24, the NJ Department of Health (NJDOH) issued a new directive regarding visitation in all long-term care (LTC) settings, including Assisted Living Residences. The guidance can be found on the LTCO website at www.nj.gov/ltco. It was prompted by new guidance from the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) on November 12, which required all CMS-regulated nursing homes to allow indoor visitation at all times and for all residents.



This NJDOH guidance reiterates that all NJ Nursing Home residents have the right to unscheduled visitation at all times. It also makes clear that all residents of Assisted Living Residences, Comprehensive Personal Care Homes, Dementia Care Homes, and Residential Health Care Facilities can have unscheduled visitation, subject to visitation policies prior to the COVID pandemic (e.g. within previously designated visiting hours). These settings should not impose restrictions beyond those they enforced pre-COVID. For nursing home residents, there should be no restrictions on the time (hour) of visits. Nursing home residents have the right under federal law to receive visitors at any time.

Some other important points:

- It does not matter if there is an COVID outbreak. Visitation is no longer halted for any time if there is a positive COVID case.
- Facilities must continue to screen visitors for COVID infection or exposure but cannot require vaccination or a COVID test to enter.
- Facilities can still limit large facility social gatherings/events during this time.
- Visitation is allowed in a resident's room unless the roommate is unvaccinated or immunocompromised, in which case visitation may take place in another designated area.

This guidance is operative for all LTC facilities now; facilities do not have a “grace period” to comply. If your facility continues to restrict visitation in any way that violates the latest NJDOH Directive, you should contact the LTCO at 877-582-6995 or the NJ Department of Health at 1-800-792-9770 for assistance.



VACCINATIONS AND BOOSTERS



While we celebrate the lifting of visitation restrictions, the LTCO continues to encourage residents, families, and LTC staff to get COVID vaccinations and/or booster shots. As we head deeper into the holiday season and as new COVID variants gain strength, it is crucial that residents, family visitors, and dedicated staff have as much protection as possible. Also, many LTC residents were among the first to get the shots in late 2020/early 2021, and more than six months have now passed since their last dose.

The NJ Department of Health has a website where you can see who should receive COVID vaccines and/or boosters, and when: [covid19.nj.gov](https://www.covid19.nj.gov). They also have a statewide hotline to find and schedule COVID vaccines: 1-855-568-0545.

Please ask your facility about plans to administer COVID vaccines or boosters on site and/or ask staff for help if you need to schedule a vaccine or booster. If you cannot get help or information, call the LTCO: 877-582-6995.

SOCIAL ISOLATION SURVEY: YOUR INPUT IS NEEDED!

The NJ Department of Human Services (DHS) is researching the effects of social isolation on certain groups of people. If you are 65+, have a disability, suffer from mental illness, or have served in the military, DHS wants to hear about your experience. It is important that people living in LTC settings participate and make their voices heard. You can fill out the survey or ask your Activities Director or Social Worker to help you fill it out by opening this link and answering the questions: <http://tiny.cc/njsocialisolation>.



Winter Word Scramble

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New Jersey Office of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman

Laurie Facciarossa Brewer, LTC Ombudsman

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