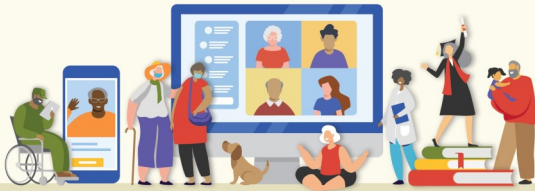




The Beacon

A Newsletter for Long-Term Care Residents

May 2021



May is Older Americans Month!

Each year in May, we commemorate Older Americans Month to encourage and recognize the countless contributions that older adults make to our communities. Their time, experience, and talents enrich the lives of those around them. This year's theme, *Communities of Strength*, recognizes the important role older adults play in fostering the connection and engagement that build strong, resilient communities.

Communities of Strength



NEW VISITATION GUIDANCE SUMMARY

On March 22nd the NJ Department of Health (DOH) updated its guidance regarding visitation in long-term care facilities during COVID. The Long-Term Care Ombudsman (LTCO) and the NJ Department of Health created a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document to help clear up confusion about this new guidance. The FAQ can be found on the LTCO and DOH websites. You can ask facility staff to print a copy for you.

The new Visitation Memo clearly states that every long-term care resident has a right to 4 types of indoor visits: end of life, compassionate care, essential caregiver and indoor social visits.

What's New?

DOH now says that you don't have to wait until your facility is out of "outbreak status" to have indoor visits. The facility only needs to be without a positive test for 14 days.

So, a staff member or fellow resident testing positive for COVID-19 does not automatically close the building to visitation for 28 or even 14 days. If testing a few days after the first positive test shows that other areas of the facility are not affected, the unaffected areas should reopen for visitation. The affected area(s) can open again 14 days after the last positive test.

Compassionate care visits and outdoor visits continue even when there is a positive case(s) and the facility is testing.



Highlights

- The facility should work with you and your family to schedule indoor visits at a time that work for all, including evenings or weekends. This applies to outdoor visits as well.
- Lack of staffing should not be used repeatedly as a reason not to allow visitors. If your facility is still not allowing visitation because it lacks staff, please call the LTCO at 1-877-582-6995.
- If you have a private room, you can likely visit in your room. If you have a shared room, you may be asked to visit in a designated common area, especially if your roommate is not vaccinated.
- Vaccinated visitors coming from another state no longer have to quarantine before visiting you. However, unvaccinated visitors must still follow the NJ travel quarantine requirement.
- The facility cannot require visitors to take a COVID-19 test but must check them for symptoms of COVID-19 by taking their temperature and asking them to fill out a questionnaire.
- Children over the age of 2 can visit if they are supervised and wearing a well-fitting mask.
- You can have private time with your loved ones without the need for constant supervision. However, facility staff may observe briefly to make sure visitors are following safety protocols.
- If you are fully vaccinated, you can touch and hug your loved ones as long as they are wearing a well-fitting mask (a surgical mask is sufficient).
- New Jersey does not require long-term care staff to be vaccinated, but individual long-term care companies may require this.

Activities and freedom of movement

- You should not have to stay in your room for days or weeks on end. Even when your facility is doing outbreak testing, residents (except those who are COVID-19 positive or are in quarantine) can leave their rooms for short periods of time for small group activities or be escorted around the facility grounds to get some fresh air.
- Your facility should also allow you to gather in small groups in large rooms, with masks, and be creative about continuing with group activities, regardless of the facility's outbreak status.
- If you are vaccinated and want to go on an outing, you do not have to quarantine when you get back unless you were exposed for more than 15 minutes to someone who has COVID-19. If you are unvaccinated, the facility may use a risk assessment tool to weigh whether you should quarantine. But simply being in a county with high COVID-19 numbers does not trigger quarantine.

New Jersey Office of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman

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www.NJ.GOV/LTCO

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