



The Beacon

A Newsletter for Long-Term Care Residents September 2021

COMPASSIONATE CARE VISITATION – An underused tool for residents and families



The LTCO wants to make sure that residents, their families, and facility staff are aware of Compassionate Care visits, what they are, and how to access them.

Compassionate Care (CC) is a designation created by the federal government last year (and since expanded) to allow visitation for residents who are suffering physically or emotionally, even when the facility is

closed to indoor visitation. Examples of where CC should be granted include: residents grieving the loss of a friend/relative; residents who need reminders or encouragement to eat/drink; residents who are losing weight; and residents who are emotionally distressed. These are just examples, and facilities must consider each request for Compassionate Care visits in a person-centered way. The facility can designate more than one visitor for CC; however, during an outbreak visitors may be asked to alternate visits. You do not have to practice social distancing during these visits. Based on our work, the LTCO believes that many residents who have lived through the COVID crisis are suffering from isolation and emotional distress and fit the definition.

If you want to have Compassionate Care visits, tell the facility Social Worker or Administrator that you are seeking this designation and ask what their process is for applying. They must have a process to consider CC visits and should promptly provide you with an answer. You can show them this newsletter and also stress that designating CC visitors benefits the facility as well, as visitors provide support and care that would otherwise fall to their staff. This definition is included in both federal and New Jersey guidance on long-term care visitation that all facilities must follow.

If facility administration is not responsive to your request for CC visitation, please call our office at 1-877-582-6995 and we can advocate for you. You can also call the Department of Health hotline at 1-800-792-9770 to report it.

LTCO MEMORY LANE TRIVIA QUESTIONS

1. Which aspiring rock and roll singer appeared on the Ed Sullivan show in 1956, but could only be shown from the waist up?
2. Who delivered the famous "I have a dream" speech in 1963?
3. Who played the role of Norman Bates in the 1960 horror movie, Psycho?
4. What was this famous boxer's name before he changed it to Muhammad Ali?
5. What movie from the 1970s made many people afraid to go swimming in the ocean?

Answers: 1. Elvis Presley 2. Martin Luther King Jr. 3. Anthony Perkins 4. Cassius Clay 5. Jaws

FACE NJ's Letter Writing Campaign



FACE NJ, the organization we featured in our July newsletter, is a group of family members who came together on social media to push for more visitation for their loved ones in long-term care. FACE NJ currently has a letter writing campaign to government officials (NJ Department of Health and the Governor) urging them to make visitation more consistent and

permanent in the event of another COVID surge or future public health emergency. Specifically, FACE NJ is asking the State to:

- review and reissue the current executive directive governing visitation and activities to make it more clear, concise, and easier to implement;
- ensure that outdoor visitation remains open, even when the facility is doing outbreak testing, (immediately as mandated) without exception, especially in these prime visitation months;
- establish a “designated visitor” for all residents to have daily visitation, regardless of any state or national health emergency. This “designated visitor” should be recorded as a part of a resident’s care plan and not require applications or onerous paperwork; and
- continue to encourage vaccination of all long-term care staff to ensure residents’ safety and freedom.

If you would like to participate, you can work with your social worker or activities staff to send letters or emails. You can also reach out to FACE NJ at gvukasnj@gmail.com for more details or assistance. If you or your family members want to join FACE NJ, you can search Facebook for the “FACE NJ” group, click to join, and answer a few simple questions.

COVID VACCINE MANDATES FOR NURSING HOME STAFF

Low staff vaccination rates continue to be a serious problem in many New Jersey nursing homes. Starting September 7th, New Jersey nursing home workers (and many other health care workers) must be fully vaccinated against COVID-19, or take COVID tests at least once a week. Governor Murphy announced this requirement via Executive Order 252 on August 6, 2021. The Governor has indicated if the new requirement doesn’t substantially boost vaccine rates, the state may remove the testing option. President Biden has also announced that the federal government is developing an emergency regulation to require all nursing home staff to be vaccinated, or the nursing home may risk losing federal funds. The LTCO is hopeful that these new mandates will result in more safety and greater freedom for all nursing home residents.



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