



State of Connecticut
Department of Aging and Disability Services
Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program
and
Department of Public Health
Office of the Commissioner



6/26/2020

Dear Resident, Family Member or Responsible Party,

The public health guidance changes as we learn more about COVID-19. As guidance develops, it is important to both the State Long Term Care Ombudsman and the Department of Public Health that we continue to communicate to you, providing updates about the measures the State is taking to protect the rights, health and safety of nursing home residents in long-term care communities.

This has been an incredibly difficult time for long-term care residents and family members across the country. Throughout this pandemic our long-term care residents have been the most impacted both by the virus and the restrictions necessary to prevent further spread of the virus. Connecticut's long-term care residents remain a priority and our state health officials continue to offer regular guidance.

We know that the impact of this ongoing isolation has been very traumatic for the residents and family members. However, we also know that providing physical distancing to slow the spread of the virus is an essential part of the plan during this public health crisis. In order to address some of the concerns related to isolation, our public health officials have provided long-term care communities with guidance for visitation which can be reviewed here: <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Departments-and-Agencies/DPH/Facility-Licensing--Investigations/Blast-Faxes/2020-55-and-up/Blast-Fax-2020-67-COVID-19-Infection-Control-and-Testing-Guidance.pdf>

CMS has also provided recommendations related to the phases for reopening long-term care communities, and you can review this at: <https://www.cms.gov/files/document/gso-20-30-nh.pdf-0>

The guidance offered the following information to long-term care communities, which is based on testing of residents and staff; the grouping of residents, known as a cohort; and test results:

“Negative/unexposed cohort”: Individuals whose test is negative

- These residents can have outdoor visits with a “Visitation Plan” in place.
- Visitors must be screened per facility policies and not allowed into the interior of the building.
- All visitors and residents wear cloth face coverings or procedure masks while visiting.
- **No food or drinks** can be consumed during visits, because that would require taking off their mask.
- Staff will monitor compliance with mask wearing and physical distancing of at least 6 feet apart.
- Visitations should be scheduled, and the number of visitors limited to reduce the risk of exposure to residents.

- **Visitors that do not follow the outlined guidance will be verbally re-educated and if non-compliance continues, they will be asked to leave** the visit due to the risk to the resident and the community at large.

“Positive Cohort”: Residents who test positive and will need to remain in isolation for a specific time period.

- Visitation via virtual platforms or window visits should be made available, but not the outdoor visitation described above.
- Residents in this cohort can go outside for fresh air with appropriate precautions and planning.
- Residents in this cohort can spend time socializing among other positive residents with appropriate precautions and planning.

“Observation Cohort”: Residents under observation while the nursing home determines their COVID-19 status.

- Visitation via virtual platforms or window visits should be made available, but not outdoor visits.
- Socializing risks additional exposure and is not recommended. Residents in this cohort can go outside for fresh air with appropriate precautions and planning.

We understand that this period of physical distancing will remain in effect until phase three of the reopening, outlined by CMS, is reached. Our public health officials are working to provide guidance related to each phase and the impact within Connecticut’s long-term care communities.

This is a great deal of information, potentially leaving you with more questions and that is very understandable. Throughout this process the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program, as well as the Department of Public Health and all other State agencies involved, will be here to provide you with the most up to date and accurate information.

If you have questions related to long-term care, you can contact the Ombudsman Program at: 1-866-388-1888. We also host a Facebook live event on Wednesdays at 5:30 pm. To participate or ask questions, please visit the Connecticut Long Term Care Ombudsman Program’s Facebook Page at <https://www.facebook.com/CTLTCOP>.

Sincerely,



Mairead Painter

State Long-Term Care Ombudsman



Deidre S. Gifford, MD, MPH

Acting Commissioner, Department of Public Health

Commissioner, Department of Social Services

55 FARMINGTON AVENUE • 12TH FLOOR, HARTFORD, CT 06105-3725

Phone: (860) 424-5055 • Fax: (860) 424-4850

Web: <https://portal.ct.gov/LTCOP>

410 Capital Avenue, P.O. Box 340308, Hartford, CT 06134-0308

Phone: (860) 509-7400 • Fax: (860) 509-7543

www.ct.gov/dph