



State of Connecticut
Department of Aging and Disability Services
Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program

3/14/2020

Dear Resident, Family Member and Responsible Party,

The Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program works to improve the quality of life and quality of care of Connecticut citizens residing in nursing homes, residential care homes and assisted living communities. One of the roles of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman is to provide information to the public regarding long-term care facilities and services, residents' rights, and legislative and policy issues.

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak continues to evolve and because of that so does the guidance that goes with it. We want to ensure that residents and family members have accurate information and are fully informed. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the health risk of COVID-19 for older adults and some individuals with preexisting medical conditions includes an increased risk for more severe illness.

Governor Lamont has signed EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 7A giving the Department of Public Health (DPH) the authority to put restrictions on visitors at nursing home facilities, residential care homes, and chronic disease hospitals. Due to the increased risk, Department of Public Health Commissioner Renée D. Coleman-Mitchell, after careful thought, consideration and consultation has issued an order to nursing homes and long term care facilities. This order prohibits any visitation for the next 30 days effective immediately except for the following categories of individuals:

- First responders, including emergency medical services, law enforcement, firefighting and emergency management personnel;
- Family members, domestic partners or other persons designated by a patient only when the facility's medical director, a licensed physician or advance practice registered nurse has determined such patient to be at the end stage of life with death being imminent;
- Any person authorized by law to oversee or investigate the provision of care and services; and
- Service providers who are required to do maintenance or repair necessary without delay for the facility's continued operation.

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These precautions have been put in place to protect the health and safety of all residents. While we understand these restrictions are extremely difficult, we want to assure you that the health and safety of residents is the primary goal. These steps were put in place to prevent and delay the spread of Coronavirus.

We are encouraging Long-Term Care communities to explore alternate ways of communication, like video chatting or bringing residents to the glass doors or windows to see and talk to family and friends. We want residents to remain in communication with their family and friends however possible.

The Ombudsman program will continue to respond to, and investigate complaints brought forward by residents, family members, and/or other individuals acting on the resident's behalf. However, due to the infection control concerns Ombudsmen will be facilitating communication with residents by phone or video chat. I want to assure you that all concerns will continue to be addressed.

All communication with the residents, their family members or legal guardians, as applicable, continue to be strictly confidential and safeguards to maintain this confidentiality will be put in place. The Long-Term Care Ombudsman program will be in regular communication with DPH and will address complaints/concerns with DPH when the program has consent from the appropriate parties.

The rights, safety and wellbeing of the residents is always at the forefront of our decision making. This is an incredibly trying time and we are asking for your assistance keeping residents' wellbeing as the priority.

For the most up to date information on COVID-19, including guidance and other resources, I encourage you to go to Connecticut ct.gov/coronavirus. Individuals who have general questions that are not answered on the website can also call 2-1-1 for assistance.

If you have specific questions or concerns related to a Long-Term Care setting you can contact the Long-Term Care Ombudsman's office at: **1-866-388-1888** Or Contact our Central Office by calling **860-424-5200** - You can also e-mail us: **ltcop@ct.gov**

Sincerely,



Mairead Painter, State Long Term Care Ombudsman
State Long-Term Care Ombudsman