

## Maintaining Routine and Procedures in Nursing Homes During COVID-19

Article By:

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The world is being affected by the new coronavirus disease (COVID-19). This is an unprecedented time, and everyone is learning different ways to cope and adjust to the new environment.

The federal government has instituted temporary changes for long-term care facilities (nursing homes) to help combat the spread of the disease. The changes include:

- restricting who can enter the facility to only allow essential health care workers in, and
- stopping communal dining and group activities.

Facilities are **required** to continue following infection control policies.

Just because we cannot visit our elderly relatives in nursing homes, does not mean that we cannot communicate with them often. Frequent communication will help maintain your relatives' mental health, as well as your own. You should speak with the nursing home staff about providing your relatives with access to Wi-Fi devices such as cell phones, tablets, or computers. This will help them stay in touch with family, the Ombudsman, and online resources. An ombudsman is an official who represents the interests of the public by investigating and addressing complaints of mal-administration or a violation of rights.

Now, more than ever, it is important for your relatives living in long-term care facilities to communicate their needs and maintain their normal routine as much as possible. They should speak with staff about exercising in their rooms and going outside for fresh air. They should not be afraid to ask for help. The staff are there for them.

Hygiene has always been a top priority in nursing homes, and the recent COVID-19 crisis has only emphasized its importance. Staff should be following established handwashing procedures and covering their mouths when they cough or sneeze. There should be posted signage throughout the nursing home to encourage the same etiquette from others.

If you or your loved ones have concerns, you can reach out to your State and local Ombudsman for

guidance and assistance.

## **STATE OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM**

### **Laurie Facciarossa Brewer, State LTC Ombudsman**

New Jersey Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman

P.O. Box 852

Trenton, NJ 08625-0852

Work: (609)826-5090 or 1-877-582-6995

Fax: (609) 943-3479

Website: <http://www.nj.gov/ooie/>

## **LOCAL OMBUDSMAN**

### **Deirdre Mraw**

#### **State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program**

Volunteer Advocate Program

P.O. Box 852

Trenton, NJ 08625-0851

Work: 609-826-5053

Fax: 609-984-3479

Area Served: Statewide

### **Amy Brown**

#### **State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program**

I Choose Home NJ/Money Follows the Person

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Area Served: Statewide

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