

The Advocate - November 2020



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Note from the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman

New visitation guidance was issued at the federal and state level in September. If you are not yet aware of this, the [guidance](#) may be found here on our [website](#). The guidance addressed issues including visitation, testing, activities, dining and entry of health care workers and other providers of services.

It is my understanding that some facilities are considering clergy calls on residents, social calls that impact the number of visitors that a resident can receive according to facility policy. Nothing could be further from the truth. Clergy are specifically referenced as service providers on page 6 of the September 17th CMS guidance. Visits by clergy should be considered what the New Oxford American Dictionary defines as, "go to see someone...for a specific purpose, such as to ...give professional advice or help...", as opposed to a social call. Many residents consider clergy visits a lifeline and consider the solace they receive from speaking with their clerics vital as they attempt to understand and navigate the drastic changes that COVID-19 has imposed on their lives. As such clergy calls on residents are the same a therapy visits, hospice visits, or visits for x-rays and lab work. These types of visits should not be considered resident visitation for purposes of limiting visits from residents' friends and loved ones under a facility visitation policy.

Even though it has been several months since the government sent out the stimulus checks, the Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman continues to learn of issues with facilities interfering with residents' rights to have and spend those stimulus checks. The Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman reminds facilities that the government stimulus checks sent to residents/tenants earlier this year, belong to residents and tenants. This is true even if the facility is the rep payee for the resident. The checks are to be spent for what the residents and tenants want and do not belong to the facility. This does not change if the facility believes that the resident owes the facility money. The fact that the stimulus checks are the property of the resident has been stated by numerous consumer fraud watchdogs, the IRS, and even in a letter by Senator Charles Grassley. Senators Grassley and Wyden sent a [letter](#) to Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General requesting assistance in stopping nursing facilities from taking stimulus payments.



News & Resources

Deadline extended until November 6 for nursing facilities and assisted living programs to sign up for the COVID-19 vaccine through CVS or Walgreens in this [article](#). View the [FAQ sheet](#) for quick answers to questions surrounding this federal program.

Assisted living programs (ALP) and nursing facilities (NF) have access to view and share a video created by AMDA-The Society for Post-Acute and Long-Term Care Medicine on what steps they are taking to keep residents/tenants safe ([ALP video](#) and [NF video](#)).

The 2020 Flu season is upon us. CDC recommends getting a flu shot in September or October, but states anyone can receive the flu shot during the season. This [article](#) announces CMS' launch of 2020 flu season campaign, providing partner resources.



Resident/Tenant Rights

Louisville, Kentucky nursing home residents showed off their superhero powers to survive this pandemic. "Super Summer" is a program in which the residents created masks and weapons to fight off loneliness and COVID-19 in this [story](#).

Tenants at Homestead in Knoxville enjoyed a parade for the changing of the seasons from summer to autumn in this [story](#).

A Marengo nursing home had a night of fun: *Booze n' Tattoos*. Residents enjoyed a beverage while getting their washable tattoo in this [story](#).



The community of Clarence came together to make signs of encouragement and hope for residents of long term care; placing signs outside resident windows to brighten spirits of residents. The project was coordinated by the United Church of Christ to have community members make signs of encouragement with positive messages to brighten residents' day and let them know the community is thinking of them. *Photo courtesy of Facebook post*



Resident/Tenant Health, Safety & Welfare

November marks the beginning of the holiday season. For the most part, residents and tenants enjoy being included in celebrations as that makes the season come alive for them. During the COVID-19 pandemic, holiday planning and visits are of utmost importance. Increased communication will help avoid some of the barriers for residents and tenants to be included in the holiday celebrations with their loved ones. This [article](#) has a variety of ideas to assist staff to ensure residents and tenants are afforded those opportunities.

Music and Memory program decreased antipsychotic use and reduce number of falls in this [article](#). The study explored program success in nursing facilities across three years and the program tries to improve the quality of life for older adults with dementia and other cognitive or behavioral symptoms through personalized music.

The following Medicare [informational sheet](#) distributed by Justice in Aging explains the open enrollment for Medicare beneficiaries. Final dates are December 7 for Medicare Open Enrollment and December 15 for Market Place.



Managed Care Ombudsman Program

Medicaid Information [Letter NO. 2182](#)-MC-FFS announced the 2020 Annual Provider Training. Page two of the letter contains the table to select the date and time to attend one of the Zoom sessions.

Medicaid Informational [Letter NO. 2183](#)-MC-FFS - HCBS Waiver Transportation and Daily SCL Services: Clarifies the differences between transportation as a service under the Brain Injury, Elderly, Physical Disability and Intellectual Disability Waivers; and non-emergency medical transportation, and clarifies non-essential transportation that could be included under the above Waivers and possible costs to a member.



Volunteer Ombudsman Program

lisa.vanklavern@iowa.gov or 515-971-6294 "We are your Voice for Choice-Iowa Volunteer Ombudsman Program"

VOP Statewide Conference Call

November is National Alzheimer's Awareness month. This month's statewide call will be held on Wednesday, November 18 at 10:00 and will be presented by the Alzheimer's Association. If you do view a recording of a previously recorded statewide conference call be sure to email volunteervop@iowa.gov to receive one hour of continuing education credit.



Events & Educational Opportunities

When Ageism Meets the Other Isms: Recognizing and Respecting the Diversity of Older People Webinar series presented by Iowa Abuse in Later Life Coordinated Community Response Team

Not eligible for VOP CEUs

Nov 5 (9 - 11 am) *Living and Aging in Iowa: A Focus on the Native American, Asian, Pacific Islander, and African American Communities*
via Zoom meeting

[More Information | Register](#)

Mouth Care Matters

Not eligible for VOP CEUs

Dec 3-4 (8:30 am - 12 pm and 8:30 - 11 am)

Zoom meeting
[More Information](#) | [Register](#)

Iowa Fraud Fighters

Eligible for VOP CEUs

YouTube Channel Videos

1. [Protect Loved Ones From Investment & Medicare Fraud](#)
2. [Don't Fall Victim to Online Scams](#)

The mission of the Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman is to protect the health, safety, welfare and rights of individuals residing in long-term care by investigating complaints, seeking resolutions to problems and providing advocacy, with the goal of enhancing quality of life and care.

Please feel free to forward this newsletter to others who may be interested.

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