

# The Advocate - April 2020



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## Note from the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman

**COVID-19** has now impacted every state in the nation. Our way of life has changed. One month ago, who would have dreamed we would not be able to get a haircut or go out to dinner with friends. But these are among the many things we must forego to mitigate this virus. These mitigation practices are also impacting long-term care.

Residents/tenants and loved ones feel the impact of visiting restrictions. New ways of facilitating communication must be utilized to lessen negative impacts of these restrictions. Media has covered many stories of friends and relatives visiting with nursing facility residents through windows while talking on the phone. If you know of a resident/tenant that may be in need of a phone please check out the [Safelink website](#) to determine if the resident/tenant can qualify for a free phone.

Other media stories share out-of-the-box ideas to help residents deal with the temporary reality that all of us are trying to navigate. Examples include: In Algona, one gentleman walked around the facility playing the bagpipes click to view [KCCI's video](#). Another KCCI [story](#) captured how school teachers created an Amazon wish-list for residents and tenants at two long-term care facilities in Knoxville. KCCI news segment [This is Iowa](#) shows how a nursing facility in Newell received a drive-by parade of cars (*starting at 42 seconds*). KTVO showed how staff assisted a resident in a Keosauqua nursing facility to hold a [visit](#) via telephone call with the visitor on other side of window. KCRG showed how one assisted living program in Anamosa received [videos](#) addressed to tenants from out of state loved ones and community members. One nursing facility in Onawa gave a husband of a resident a room free of charge to continue visits, see the [Siouxlandnews story](#).

The Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman encourages residents, tenants and caregivers to stay well during this public health emergency. Our [website](#) contains information for those living and working in long-term care. The website also contains links to the the Iowa Department of Public Health, Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals and the State of Iowa's COVID-19 [website](#).



## News & Resources

Federal court grants right to appeal "observation stay" designations by hospitals. To learn more see the following [article](#).

Due to COVID-19 national emergency declaration the three midnight stay requirements for Medicare to pay for a skilled nursing facility stay may be waived. For more information view this [article](#).

The Office of Inspector General (OIG) has issued a [COVID-19 Fraud Alert](#). This a time of uncertainty where people may fall victim to scams either in-person, on the phone or electronic means.



## Resident/Tenant Rights

### Communicating with residents and families about COVID-19

CMS is restricting visits due to COVID-19. This might be the perfect time to start a Family Council group to engage the families during this pandemic. You may want to start by offering a Family Council meeting via conference call or another platform like Skype, Google Duo, Google Hangouts or ZOOM. Offering information about how everyone is doing (generally), and how the facility is keeping residents safe, entertained and cared for would be great topics to cover. Another facility offered an Infection Control program via

a Skype call and it went over so well, the Family Council group requested a second program on the same topic! Families are struggling with a way to stay connected, and using technology to make this happen is an easy solution.

Discussing the realities of COVID-19 with families and residents is a scary and daunting task, but it does not have to be difficult. This [link](#) provides excellent tips and suggestions for communicating with residents/tenants and families about COVID-19.



## Resident/Tenant Health, Safety & Welfare

Our office recently sent each long-term care facility a check-in survey in order to gather innovative ideas for [six-feet apart activities](#) and [online activities](#) about how you are meeting your residents/tenants' needs. Thank you to all of you who took the survey! It was pleasing to hear how many long-term care facilities are utilizing social media and other virtual means to ensure residents/tenants are connected to their families during the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, it was heartwarming to hear how many long-term care facilities have hired additional activities staff to ensure 1:1 time is given to each resident/tenant. All departments can have a hand in 1:1 support as well. When finished with your task, share an extra minute or two with the resident or tenant. Share a joke, or just ask how they are doing. These moments mean the world to the residents/tenants.

National Certification Council for Activity Professionals (NCCAP) has shared various activities on their [website](#). Scroll down about halfway through the page to view those suggestions.

Residents at Elm Crest Senior Living Community in Harlan "*Will Survive*" in their [music video](#).



## Involuntary Discharge

The following information is on our [website](#) regarding Governor Reynold's Proclamations issued April 2, March 26 and March 19 regarding involuntary discharges and transfers. The links are under the *State of Iowa* item.



## Managed Care Ombudsman Program

DHS has requested and received waivers to meet the needs of Medicaid recipients and providers. This informational [letter](#) was issued April 2, 2020 and contains links to pertinent information.



## Volunteer Ombudsman Program

### Volunteer Recognition Week April 19-25

We thank each and every one of the Volunteer Ombudsman for all of their advocacy and work in long-term care facilities across the State of Iowa. Lisa looks forward to recognizing each of your contributions at a later date when the threat of COVID-19 has been mitigated.

### VOP Statewide Conference Call

This month's statewide call will be held on Wednesday, April 15 at 10:00 am. Speakers from the Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals, Health Facilities Division will be presenting on nursing facility surveys while touching on the Volunteer Ombudsman's role and explanation of the public exit. Notes from the past calls may also be found on the [website](#). If you do view a recording of a previously recorded statewide conference call be sure to email [volunteervop@iowa.gov](mailto:volunteervop@iowa.gov) to receive one hour of continuing education credit.

### VOP CEUs

The featured webinar/video this time is [Brain Changes](#). Be sure to fill out the [CEU form](#) if you do attend.

### Out and About

VOP Coordinator Lisa Van Klavern will not be out and about until the threat of COVID-19 has been mitigated.

*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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