



Office of the State Long Term Care Ombudsman

Two Empire State Plaza
Fifth Floor, Albany, NY 12223-1251
www.ltombudsman.ny.gov

Claudette Royal
State Ombudsman
1-855-582-6769

Dear Administrators, Residents and Resident Representatives,

As you know by now, long-term care facilities nationwide must restrict visitors and non-essential health care personnel per federal and state guidance. In response to this directive, all New York State (NYS) Certified Long Term Care Ombudsmen will refrain from entering long-term care facilities and will provide “virtual” visiting by phone, email and other web-based technologies. This is a temporary, but necessary, change to protect the health and safety of residents. As the State Ombudsman, I am in regular contact with Federal and State authorities and we are consistently monitoring the status of the COVID-19 outbreak. We will return to normal visitation once it has been deemed safe to do so.

During this time, facilities, residents, and resident representatives who would otherwise visit in-person, need to use alternative means of communication such as phone, Facetime, Skype, email, etc. One of the chief concerns resident representatives have is their anxiety of not knowing how their loved one is being cared for during this time. To proactively address this, facilities should provide alternative means of communication to ensure residents and their representatives are staying informed and maintaining regular contact.

Please be assured that the NYS Ombudsman Program will continue to respond to, and investigate complaints brought forth by residents, family members, or other individuals acting on the resident’s behalf. Ombudsmen will be facilitating communication by phone or video conferencing and concerns will be addressed. The rights, safety, and well-being of residents is our priority. We will continue to represent resident’s best interests and work to ensure quality care remains a primary focus during this difficult time.

If you have concerns related to a long-term care facility, contact your local Long Term Care Ombudsman office at 518-372-5667, ext. 213 or ext. 214 or via email to Pat Finlayson: pfinlayson@cathcharschdy.org or Noelle Marie: nmarie@cathcharschdy.org.

Sincerely,

Claudette Royal
New York State Long Term Care Ombudsman

The Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman is a programmatically independent advocacy service located within the New York State Office for the Aging. Points of view, opinions or positions of the Ombudsman Program do not necessarily represent the views, positions or policy of the New York State Office for the Aging.

COVID-19 AND LONG-TERM CARE

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19, also known as Novel Coronavirus, is a part of the larger family of Coronaviruses. COVID-19 has not previously been identified in humans until the start of this pandemic. This strain of the virus is zoonotic (can transmit between humans and animals). Symptoms include fever, cough, shortness of breath and difficulty breathing. At this point, the virus has spread to countries across the globe and almost every state of the United States.

Older adults and individuals with pre-existing medical conditions (specifically Heart Disease, Diabetes, and Lung Disease) are at increased risk to experience severe symptoms caused by this virus including kidney failure and death.

How can you protect yourself?

To protect yourself from being infected with COVID-19 practice regular hand washing, avoid close contact with individuals showing respiratory symptoms (cough, shortness of breath, etc.), and cover your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing with a disposable tissue or napkin. Social Distancing is another widely recommended practice.

What is Social Distancing?

Social Distance is an important tool when managing the spread of infectious diseases. It aims to reduce the amount of social contact and therefore reduce the rate of infection within communities. By doing so, we are able to delay and minimize the peak of infection. You might hear this referred to as “flattening the curve.” Our health care agencies have limited capacity so it is imperative to restrict the spread of the virus as much as possible. The Center for Disease Control recommends remaining at least 6 feet away from others when possible, avoid large crowds of people and avoid contact with items that may have been in contact with respiratory droplets (from cough, sneeze, etc.).

How does this affect you?

In order to protect residents of long-term care facilities the Center for Disease Control, New York State Department of Health and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services have restricted visitation to only emergency, compassionate care. This includes all volunteers and non-essential personnel. Large gatherings such as dining or activities must be suspended or adjusted to avoid unnecessary contact. Meals will be provided in rooms. Long-term care facilities should also initiate active screening for any staff member or resident who shows signs of infection such as fever, or respiratory symptoms.

How can I contact my Ombudsman?

In order to protect residents from the spread of the virus, the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program has temporarily ceased facility visits until further notice. However, if you are in need of assistance or have questions about the current situation, please call the number below. The Regional Ombudsman Coordinators will help to assist as best as possible under the current conditions.



**Office of the State
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Organization Name: Catholic Charities Senior & Caregiver Support Services

Phone: 518-372-5667

Pat Finlayson: Ext 213 - pfinlayson@cathcharschdy.org

Noelle Marie: Ext. 214 - nmarie@cathcharschdy.org

Leave a message and your call will be returned as soon as possible.