New York State Department of Health Announces Resumption of Limited Visitation to Nursing Homes

Visits Limited to 2 People per Resident; Temperature Checks, PPE, Social Distancing Required

Resumes Ombudsman Program in all Nursing Homes; Ombudsmen Must Test Negative Within Last Week, Wear PPE, Undergo Temperature Checks

ALBANY, N.Y. (July 10, 2020) - State Department of Health Commissioner Dr. Howard Zucker today announced nursing homes and long term care facilities in New York will be allowed to resume limited visitations for facilities that have been without COVID-19 for at least 28 days, a threshold set by the federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. Residents in these facilities will be allowed two visitorsat a time,and the visitors must undergo temperature checks, wear face coverings and socially distance during the visit. At least one of the two visitors must be at least 18 years of age or older. For each facility, only 10 percent of the residents can be allowed visitors at any time;for example, in a 100-bed facility no more than 10 residents can have visitors per dayin order to maintain proper social distancing and ensure safe compliance.Nursing Homes accepting visitors will be required to send their visitation plan to NYSDOH and affirmatively attest that they are following the guidance outlined here.

The Health Commissioner also announced the resumption of on-site visitation for the state's Long-Term Care Ombudsman program, which provides additional support to residents of nursing homes and long-term care facilities, effective July 15, 2020. Ombudsman staff must utilize appropriate PPE for the duration of the visit, and must be screened as if they were a staff person of such nursing home, including having to present a verified negative test result to the nursing home within the past week.

The Department of Health will make adjustments to the visitation policy as appropriate based on factsand data following this initial phase to ensure the health and safety of residents, staff and visitors.View State DOH guidance for resumption of limited visitation at nursing homes, adult care facilities and pediatric skilled nursing facilities.

"With the knowledge we now have about how COVID-19 came into nursing homes – mainly through asymptomatic staff and visitors through no fault of their own – it is critical that as we resume visitations to these facilitieswe do itin a smartand cautious way to ensure the health and safety of residents and staff, "**State Health Commissioner Dr. Howard Zucker said.** "We will continue to closely monitor the situation in each facility, andmake adjustments based on the facts and data moving forward. I know how painful it has been for residents of these facilities to endure such a long period of time without seeing family and loved ones, and my hope is that this adjustment to the visitation policy will provide some comfort to everyone."

In June, the federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services issued guidance saying: "Nursing homes should continue to follow CMS and CDC guidance for preventing the transmission of COVID-19, and follow state and local direction. Because nursing home residents are especially vulnerable, CMS does not recommend reopening facilities tovisitors (except for compassionate care situations) until phase three when:There have been no new, nursing home onset COVID-19 cases in the nursing home for 28 days."