



### Support for Our Nursing Home Residents Under Strict Isolation Measures

In an effort to protect nursing homes residents, who are among the most vulnerable to COVID-19 infection, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services has enacted strict isolation procedures for every resident. All but essential medical personnel are now prohibited from entering a nursing home. What many people don't know is that the isolation guidelines extend far beyond visitors. Communal dining has been banned, as have group activities. Residents also must maintain six feet of social distancing from other residents as recommended by CDC guidelines. This means that for much of the time, residents are confined to their rooms.

In response, nursing homes have been turning to creative solutions to support residents through technology, social media, spiritual services, "doorway" activities and individualized staff time. Homes are also creating new opportunities for community members to send messages of support to residents and staff.

#### Technology

Homes are taking full advantage of Skype, FaceTime and other video calling software so that residents have the extra comfort of seeing their loved ones while they chat. Smart devices and tablets are being used for games, videos, and virtual tours of museums, national parks and zoos. HINT: If you have a tablet to donate, your local nursing home can always make good use of it with their residents.

#### Social Media

Many nursing homes are posting photos and videos of resident activities on their Facebook pages. They hope to reassure families that life continues at the home, and show what they're doing to keep residents engaged, supported and cared for.

#### Doorway Activities

Under federal isolation rules, the only way for residents to participate in group activities is through the doorways of their rooms. Thus, "doorway activities" were born. From the hallway, staff are leading doorway exercise classes, doorway bingo and doorway singing. Some other lo-fi group activities we have seen are the telephone game between doorways with cans and string, and scavenger hunts that residents can do in their rooms.

#### Individualized Staff Support

Whenever possible, homes are making sure that residents have daily one-on-one time with a staff member, outside of their daily care. Staff spend time with residents to play cards, work on a puzzle or just visit. For those who need it, staff are also going on walks with residents one at a time.

#### Spiritual Support

Spirituality plays an important role in many of our residents' lives. Unfortunately, under isolation rules normal church services are impossible. Access to chaplains and other spiritual advisors may also be restricted. Some residents are able to attend virtual church services on a computer or smart device. Homes are also holding services and singing hymns from the hallways outside resident rooms. Staff are also trying to do one-on-one daily devotions with residents who want to keep up their spiritual practices.

### Community Support

Homes are doing everything they can to combat the feelings of loneliness and isolation that residents may feel during this pandemic. This is where support from our communities can really shine.

Examples of community support that we have seen:

- Video messages for the nursing home's internal TV channel
- Drawings and cards from children of staff and community members
- Homes have set up web pages and email addresses so that community members can send letters and messages of support. The messages are printed out and hand-delivered to each resident.
- Some nursing homes have weekly visits and activities with schools and day cares that must be suspended. Those children are now sending letters and drawings to tell the residents how much they are loved and missed. When the weather improves, one daycare plans to have the children play games on the lawn so that residents can watch from their windows

**LeadingAge Kansas is the state association for not-for-profit and faith-based aging services. We have 160 member organizations across Kansas, which include not-for-profit nursing homes, retirement communities, hospital long-term care units, assisted living, homes plus, senior housing, low-income housing, home health agencies, home and community-based service programs, PACE and Meals on Wheels. Our members serve more than 25,000 older Kansans each day and employ more than 20,000 people across the state.**