

Tips for dementia caregivers of individuals in assisted living

The CDC has provided guidance on infection control and prevention of COVID-19 in nursing homes. This guidance is for the health and safety of residents. Precautions may vary based on local situations.

- Check with the facility regarding their procedures for managing COVID-19 risk. Ensure they have your emergency contact information and the information of another family member or friend as a backup.
- Do not visit your loved one if you have any signs or symptoms of illness.
- Depending on the situation in your local area, facilities may limit or not allow visitors. This restriction is to protect the residents, but it can be difficult if you are unable to see them.
- If visitation is not allowed, ask the facility how you can have contact with your loved one. Options include telephone calls, video chats, or even emails to check-in.
- If your family member is unable to engage in calls or video chats, ask the facility how you can keep in touch with facility staff to get updates.

Suggested Options for Visits:

- **Window visits** – confirm with your loved one's facility, if you can stand/sit outside a window. The window should remain closed to further protect from the spread of the virus. Depending on their ability, you may be able to talk with them on their phone at the window, play music, or whatever they enjoy. If their room is not accessible on the first floor, ask the facility if there is another area that they can bring them to for these visits.
- **Skype, Facetime, Zoom** – check with your facility if they can set up a laptop, tablet, or other devices so that you can visit via technology. Understand that while you may have previously spent an hour or more with your loved one, virtual visits such as these may be time-limited.
- **Pictures, Cards** – encourage family members to send family photos, drawings by children, and cards to their loved one.
- **Window games** – ask the facility if they can draw on the windows, color, play tic tac toe, anything that your loved one may engage in and enjoy.
- **Bird feeders** - encourage families to confirm with the facility that they can set up a bird feeder outside the window so that the resident can enjoy the birds.
- **Photo albums** - drop it off to the facility with stories and notes that the caregiver can use to connect and reminisce with your loved one.
- **Music** - share your loved one's favorite genre of music, singer, song, etc. If possible, provide a device with the music already downloaded for the caregivers to set up.
- **Ask for photos or other ways to connect** - ask the facility if they can send pictures or connect electronically through an application so family members can check-in and see their loved one.

Tips for supporting persons living with dementia receiving home-based services

- Ensure that the individual conducts a temperature check before they enter the home. Anyone with a temperature over 100° F should not be providing care or allowed into the home.
- Ask the staff person if they have been around anyone who has tested positive. If so, do not let them into your home.
- Contact the agency and ask them to explain their protocols to reduce the spread of COVID-19.
- Ensure that the staff member washes their hands upon arrival and regularly throughout their time in the home.
- Ask the staff member to wear a mask.
- Even if staff follow CDC guidance, bringing anyone into your home increases the risk of spreading COVID-19.