



VOICES Viewpoint



**UPHOLDING THE RIGHTS & DIGNITY OF
NURSING HOME RESIDENTS**

What is VOICES?

VOICES, Inc., is a non-profit organization. We provide Long-Term Care Ombudsman services to you whether you live in a nursing home or licensed assisted living home in Vanderburgh County. We investigate your complaints, help resolve your problems, and protect your rights. We can help with quality of life issues, selecting the right facility, sources of payment, advanced directives and resident rights. We are here to help you!

**Call Michelle Motta or Alicia Reeves at
1-812-423-2927 for free, confidential assistance**

Free at Last?—Well, Almost

What a year it has been! We have all suffered through much loss and disappointment due to the COVID-19 pandemic—some more than others. The isolation has taken a toll on so many folks. Being able to reconnect with your friends or family and see the smile on their face and share a big bear hug is something we all long for and need in our lives. There is good news!

Our government has FINALLY recognized how detrimental isolation is for you. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, in addition to the Indiana State Department of Health, are instructing your home to now offer indoor visits as well as outdoor visits. Of course, there are certain rules to be followed.

For the “current” information on visitation, see pages 2 and 3. Enjoy reconnecting with those special folks in your life!

Michelle and Alicia,
Your Ombudsmen

Visitation Guidelines for Nursing Homes and Licensed Assisted Living Homes in Indiana

Core principles should be followed in ALL visitations

1. Screening for signs and symptoms of COVID-19
2. Hand hygiene (use of alcohol-based hand rub is preferred)
3. Face covering or mask (covering mouth and nose)
4. Social distancing of at least six (6) feet as much as possible

Outdoor Visitation

1. Facilities should create accessible and safe spaces for outdoor visitation.
2. Outdoor visits are preferred over indoor visits.
3. Outdoor visits should continue **EXCEPT** when:
 - a. There is bad weather,
 - b. Resident is COVID positive, or
 - c. Resident is in quarantine.
4. Facility COVID-19 outbreak is NOT a reason to postpone outdoor visitation.
5. When possible, visits should be for one or two hours with up to two visitors per resident.

Indoor Visitation

1. A facility must allow indoor visits.
2. A facility must create a policy for:
 - a. Normal visitation hours,
 - b. Length of visits,
 - c. The number of visitors per resident, and
 - d. The number of visitors at any one time.
3. If any visitors are not available during normal visitation hours, facilities should work with residents so visitations are available based on resident preference.
4. When possible, visits should be for one or two hours with up to two visitors per resident.
5. Facilities should allow indoor visitation at all times and for all residents (regardless of vaccination status), EXCEPT when:
 - a. COVID-19 county positivity rate is more than 10% **and**
 - b. Less than 70% of residents in the facility are fully vaccinated **and**
 - c. The resident is unvaccinated **or**
 - d. Residents have a confirmed COVID-19 infection, until they have met the criteria for release from quarantine **or**
 - e. Residents are in quarantine, whether vaccinated or unvaccinated, until they have met criteria for release from quarantine.

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Privacy

1. Long-term care facilities should allow visits to be conducted with sufficient privacy.
2. Facilities are not required to continuously watch each visitor and visitation. However, if a facility has reason to believe that a visitor may not follow the core principles of infection control (see “core principles on page 2), then the facility may choose to frequently or continuously, supervise the visitor and visitation.

Visitors

1. Visitors that do not follow the core principles should be asked to leave the facility.
2. Visitors should go directly to the designated visitation area.
3. While visits in designated visitation areas are still encouraged, in-room visits may occur in facilities for any reason while following the core principles of COVID-19 infection prevention.
4. Visits for residents who share a room should not be conducted in the resident’s room, unless the roommate remains out of the room during the visit.

Physical Touch:

If the resident is fully vaccinated, they can choose to have close contact (including touch) with their visitor while wearing a well-fitting face mask and performing hand-hygiene before and after. Visitors should physically distance from other residents and staff in the facility.

When there is a new case of COVID-19 among residents or staff, a facility should immediately suspend all indoor visitation, except in a few special circumstances such as Compassionate Care visits.

Compassionate Care Visitation

Visitation should be allowed in compassionate care circumstances regardless of the resident’s vaccination status. Such circumstances include but are not limited to:

1. End-of-life situations
2. A resident’s relative or other loved one is an essential caregiver for the resident
3. A resident who is grieving
4. A resident, who is experiencing emotional distress

*This information was taken from the Indiana State Department of Health
“Long-Term Care Facility Guidelines in Response to COVID-19 Vaccination” last updated 4/7/2021.*

For the latest information about guidance pertaining to COVID-19 for long-term care homes,
go to <https://www.coronavirus.in.gov/2399.htm>

**"Freedom is the open window through which pours the
sunlight of the human spirit and human dignity."**

~Herbert Hoover

What You Need to Know About Your Stimulus Check!

1. The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has already, or will be sending a third stimulus payment for you.
2. You should receive your stimulus payments (up to \$1,400) in the same way you receive your social security benefits—such as by direct deposit, check or pre-paid debit card.
3. However, if you have more than \$75,000 in adjusted gross income as an individual, or more than \$150,000 in adjusted gross income as a married couple, your stimulus check will be reduced.
4. If you do receive stimulus money, it belongs to YOU! The facility CANNOT take it. YOU have the right to spend it how YOU choose.
5. If you are on Medicaid, this money is not to be counted as a resource for 12 months from the day you received it. Any of your stimulus money remaining after 12 months will count as an asset. If you have more than \$2,000 in assets, you exceed the allowable limit and will get kicked off Medicaid.

This is VERY basic information and not to be considered legal advice. For free legal advice, you can call “Talk to a Lawyer” the 1st Thursday of the month from 4:30 to 6:00 CST or the 3rd Tuesday of the month from 11:30—1:00 CST at **812-618-4845**.

iPads Have Arrived at Your home!

VOICES applied for and received a \$21,000 grant, through the Evansville Department of Metropolitan Development, for CARES Act money. The grant is for purchase and distribution of a number of iPad tablets for you and your neighbors in your long-term care home to share.

As advocates for you and your neighbors we at VOICES understand, now more than ever, the importance of you reconnecting or staying connected with those you care about. And, if you lose yourself in a game of solitaire or Candy Crush Saga on the tablet, it’s a bonus!

Alicia and I just dropped off at least 1 iPad to your home. Please give staff some time to get the tablets fully charged and set up. There will be a point person at your home you can “check out” a tablet from. Just remember, we could only purchase a limited number of tablets, so please be patient.

Also, **please give us feedback on how you are choosing to use the tablets** by emailing iPads@voicesinc.info or calling 1-812-423-2927.

VOICES is Only Able to Provide Essential Advocacy Services to Those in Long-Term Care Homes Because of:

Donations from generous people! Partial funding for the Ombudsman Program is provided by a Community Development Block Grant administered through the City of Evansville, Department of Metropolitan Development.

In addition, we are grateful for The Thomas A. & Sharon K. Ruder Foundation who partners with VOICES to uphold the dignity and quality of life of those living in long-term care homes in Vanderburgh County.

