

Tony Evers
Governor



DIVISION OF MEDICAID SERVICES

1 WEST WILSON STREET
PO BOX 309
MADISON WI 53701-0309

Andrea Palm
Secretary

State of Wisconsin
Department of Health Services

Telephone: 608-266-8922
Fax: 608-266-1096
TTY: 711

April 28, 2020

Dear Guardians, Family, and Friends of Family Care and IRIS Residents Living in Long-Term Care Settings:

Thank you for your ongoing help in keeping your loved one safe during the coronavirus (COVID-19) public health emergency. In order to protect vulnerable residents, long term care facilities are continuing to restrict visitation in accordance with guidance from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services. Facilities have been directed to limit all visitors and nonessential health care personnel, with limited exceptions for certain compassionate care situations, such as an end-of-life scenario.

We know that it is extremely difficult to not be able to visit in person with your loved one, but the restriction on visitation is working and is keeping residents safe and healthy. Residents and staff at long-term care facilities are at the highest risk of becoming sick or severely ill due to COVID-19, and visitors are the most likely source of introduction of the virus that causes COVID-19 to a facility. Visitors can spread the virus without even knowing they are sick or even before showing symptoms of illness. Therefore, thank you for following these necessary visitor restrictions to keep residents safe.

We know it is important to stay connected with your loved one during this challenging time. Some alternatives to an in-person visit might include:

- Using FaceTime, Skype, or other mobile media, if your loved one has access to a device or as arranged by the facility.
- Sending extra cards, notes, postcards, being sure to keep your message short and positive.
- Phoning your loved one often, but please try not to call during the busiest times of day if staff need to assist your loved one with the phone.
- Asking the staff if someone can call you periodically to give you an update about how your loved one is doing, if your loved one is unable to talk on the phone or use mobile media to stay in touch.

In compassionate care situations, visitation may be allowed. Decisions about visitation during an end-of-life situation are made on a case-by-case basis and include careful screening of visitors for fever or respiratory symptoms.

We encourage you to review the Wisconsin Department of Health Services' website for information about COVID-19, including its symptoms, how it spreads, and actions you can take to protect your health: <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/index.htm>.

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Thank you for continuing to follow restrictions on visitation. You are helping to keep residents safe and healthy, and we appreciate your understanding during this challenging time. If you have questions or concerns on ways to connect to your loved one, please contact your Managed Care Organization or IRIS Consultant Agency to assist you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Curtis J. Cunningham". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "C" and a long, sweeping underline.

Curtis J. Cunningham
Assistant Administrator for Long Term Care Benefits and Programs
Division of Medicaid Services