

The Family Experience in Long-Term Care During the COVID-19 Visitation Restriction

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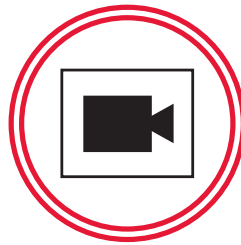
A national end of visitation to nursing homes was mandated by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) on March 13, 2020. Many states or long-term care organizations also prohibited visitation to assisted living facilities at the same time. Families and long-term care organizations were forced to make dramatic shifts in the ways they stayed in touch. How did facilities and families adjust? How are family perceptions about facilities related to these new patterns of communication?

198 family members of residents in assisted living and nursing homes participated in an online survey between April 29, 2020 and June 19, 2020. Participants were recruited via Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and other media. About two-thirds (57.9%) were family members of residents in assisted living or residential care facilities. The remainder had residents in nursing homes. Respondents from 21 states completed the survey. Most respondents were from Ohio and other midwestern states, but ranged from California to New York.

COMMUNICATION WITH RESIDENTS



Telephone is the most common way for families to stay in touch with residents—about half (**46.5%**) report the resident can use the phone independently.



Only **8.8%** of residents are able to manage video calls such as Skype or FaceTime independently; however, **62.4%** can manage them with assistance.

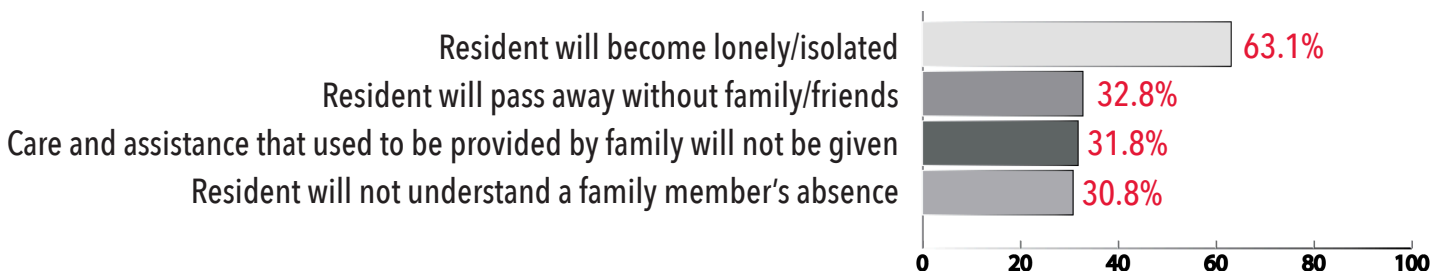


Over half of families (**55.8%**) can see and talk to the resident through a window.

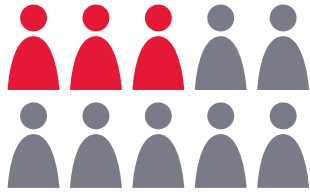


Alternative ways of staying in touch *increased* contact for some families. 37.5% of those who previously visited once a week say they are now contacting the resident several times a week or daily. Several are using Amazon Echo to “drop in on Mom and she doesn’t have to do anything.”

FAMILY CONCERNS



COMMUNICATION WITH FACILITY



About 3 in 10 families (27.0%) say they do not get any general information from the facility about how things are going.

35

PERCENT

Over a third of families (34.9%) report that there are COVID-19 positive cases among the residents or staff in the facility. Another 15.4% don't know whether any cases are present.

Most common general information strategies



31.8%

Mass emails

VS.



18.7%

Letters or notices through postal mail

2/3

(63.1%) say the general information they get about the facility is the right amount.

1/2

(55.3%) think they are getting the right amount of information about the resident.

Almost all of the families who think they are getting the right amount of information say they are told:

- a story or anecdote about the resident (92.0%)
- how the resident is spending time (87.8%)
- about the resident's mood (81.4%)

IMPACT ON FAMILIES

Communication—or a lack thereof—has an impact on families. Families who don't know if COVID-19 is present are the least likely to **recommend** the facility or have **peace of mind** about the care the resident was getting, even compared to families who are aware of COVID-19 cases in the facility. As one family member said, "It is horrible that I can NOT trust the place she lives in."

Families who don't know if COVID-19 is present are more likely to **consider a move out of the facility** (60.7%) than families who know COVID-19 is present (44.4%). Among all families, most have not made a move because they do not have the skills or resources to care for the resident at home (54.8%).

Despite concerns and challenges, about three-quarters (74.3%) of families have peace of mind about the care the resident is receiving while they aren't there and would recommend the facility to a family member or friend (78.4%). Of those who don't know whether there is COVID-19 in the facility, only 53.6% would recommend the facility to others.

Many expressed appreciation. "All is well...She is getting the care she needs in as safe an environment as she could be in." Another said "I was extremely glad when they closed the nursing home so quickly to avoid the virus."

Others shared concerns. "I understand the need to keep the residents safe, but at what cost?" And, "They are so lonely and bored. It breaks my heart."