**Idaho Commission on Aging (ICOA) Technical Guidance**

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| **Policy Subject** | **Policy #** |
| **Window and Outdoor Visitation to Long Term Care Facilities**  **Guidance** | **TG.OM.02** |

Long Term Care Ombudsman are mandated resident advocates as authorized through the Older Americans Act and are required to be accessible to residents residing in long term care facilities. Covid-19 hasn’t changed what we do…… It has changed how we fulfill the requirements of our job.

We have developed new skills... out of necessity to provide access to the Ombudsman Program these past four months and will continue to use these methods as our primary source of contact for the wellbeing and safety of the Ombudsman and the residents residing in long term care facilities.

The following protocol will be implemented for Idaho to increase accessibility to residents residing in long term care facilities to the Ombudsman program for advocacy purposes. This protocol is subject to change as conditions within the state change. This guidance will apply to both ombudsman and volunteers/assistant ombudsman.

**Prior to participating in “Window Visitation”:**

If an Ombudsman has an underlying medical condition, that individual should talk to his or her doctor to see if they should conduct any type of facility visit. For information on people who are at higher risk, see the CDC’s guidance here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-at-higher-risk.html>

It is the responsibility of the Ombudsman to assure that they are well prior to going to a facility no matter what type of visit they are making. If an ombudsman is not feeling well, they should not make a visit to any long-term care facility.

Coughing, sneezing, and fever do not necessarily mean that a person has COVID-19. But the ombudsman should use precaution. When feeling sick, they should call their healthcare provider and then notify their supervisor as soon as possible and stay home.

If an ombudsman should test positive for COVID-19 they should notify the local health department and provide the names of facilities, they made visits to. The local Ombudsman will immediately contact the State Ombudsman.

The local ombudsman will notify the State Ombudsman prior to returning to work. Follow Area Agency protocol for returning to the workplace.

* Prior to doing any window/outdoor visits the ombudsman will have completed the CDC/Health and Welfare scheduled train the trainer PPE training as required by the State Ombudsman Program. Volunteers/assistant ombudsman will have been trained by their local ombudsman.
* Have PPE to safely perform their responsibilities to provide the maximum safety for the ombudsman, resident and staff. For window and outdoor visits, the requirement will be at a minimum cloth face coverings or surgical masks. (Remember these masks are to prevent the spread and not to protect you from acquiring COVID 19). Social distancing and appropriate standard precautions will be a necessity for your safety and wellbeing.
* Don their face masks upon leaving their vehicle, always sanitize and maintain 6-foot social distancing.
* Appropriately Doffing their PPE and hand sanitizing prior to entering their vehicles.

**In preparation for a facility window/outdoor visit**

Make inquires, with all licensed facilities within the region, as to each facility’s process for visitation. A great deal of latitude has been given to facilities as to how they may manage visits with residents.

Window visits may not be practical at every facility. Consideration needs to be given to the layout of the facility as well as the cognitive ability of the residents. Visits can only be made to the portion of the census that is on the window sides of the facility and there is no access to residents who do not reside on main floors of the facility.

A facility may feel the need to screen all visitors to their property including taking temperatures. If requested, the Ombudsman should cooperate with this screening. If the Ombudsman has any concerns, they should reach out to their State Ombudsman.

**When a facility is open to in-person visits.**

**Lobby Visits**

Some facilities may ask Ombudsmen to sit inside the lobby to meet with residents. Currently, this is not an approved visit method by the Office. We anticipate this will change as we move into the next phase of visitation, but it is not allowed at this time.

**Outdoor Visits**

Some facilities may allow the Ombudsman to conduct visits in an outdoor courtyard. This is allowable when the Ombudsman follows social distancing guidelines:

* The Ombudsman must maintain a minimum of 6 feet distance from all individuals.
* The Ombudsman should wear a cloth face covering/mask during the visit and use hand sanitizer as appropriate.

**Documentation of your activity**

1. Enter the visit in Get Care as a “Window/Outdoor Visit” under the topics section of the activities. Enter all pertinent sections in a similar manner that Routine Visit entries are made.

2. In addition, if posters/flyers/postcards were delivered, enter “Distributed Posters/Postcards/Flyers” in the topics section of the activity.

3. If I&A to Individuals or to Staff were conducted, enter those activities as a separate activity.