

TIPS ON HOW TO STAY CONNECTED TO YOUR LOVED ONES:

PROVIDE FACILITIES WITH YOUR MOST UP-TO-DATE EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION.



This ensures the facilities can contact you easily and provide you with updates about your loved one or the facility at large. Ask what the facility is doing to update families. Read all information that the facility sends out; these may describe systems that have been put in place to help facilitate virtual visits or phone calls.

COMMUNICATE VERBALLY WITH YOUR LOVED ONE AND BY VIDEO CALL, IF POSSIBLE.



A good old-fashion phone call is a wonderful way to stay connected. You can also think about how you can participate in mutual activities. You can play a game of trivia, work on a crossword puzzle together, sing songs, read poetry or a favorite book. You can watch a TV show at the same time. For those who are more technologically advanced, consider a video call using FaceTime, Messenger, Skype, Facebook, Zoom, etc. Ask the facility if they can make available and facilitate a video call or at least a phone call. Establish a regular contact schedule. There is so much comfort in hearing a familiar voice or seeing a familiar face.

APPOINT ONE MEMBER OF THE FAMILY TO BE THE LIAISON WITH THE FACILITY.



Find out who the main point of contact is at the facility and the best number to call so that you can stay updated on how your loved one is managing. You can share that information with the rest of the family. Ask specific questions. Are they getting help to walk around as appropriate? Are they eating their meals? Have they lost any weight? What kind of activities are offered? If a care plan meeting is scheduled, ask the facility to keep the scheduled time and hold it over the phone. We know they're busy, but it's imperative that you remain linked as a caregiver and part of the care team.

SEND PICTURES. A PICTURE IS WORTH 1000 WORDS.



Create a picture book or album with recent and past pictures of what you and the family have been up to. It can be as simple as a few pages printed on your home computer. You can include captions identifying family members and friends. Most facilities will accept packages at the front desk and will deliver to their room.

SEND CHEERFUL CARDS, NOTES, AND PACKAGES, NOT ONLY TO YOUR LOVED ONES, BUT TO OTHER RESIDENTS AND STAFF AS WELL.



Everyone loves mail. Handwritten cards and letters are more special than ever. Residents can display the cards and re-read correspondence to remind themselves that you care. Your loved one can perhaps also write back to you and your family! Letters and cards are timeless ways to bring a smile to someone's face and remind them that you are thinking of them.

SUPPORT THE FACILITY STAFF AND WORK TOGETHER.



Facilities might be short staffed and dealing with new operating procedures, and this is a hard time for them as well. Staff at nursing homes and assisted living facilities are on the front lines of the COVID-19 outbreak. They are caring for your loved ones and their own families every day. Thank them for their care, and your loved one also might want to express their appreciation too. Talk together about what they might want to give or what they see as a need for staff. Talk with staff about what they need or can receive. Raise concerns about care and rights violations with facility administration.

You can also contact the Ombudsman Program to address your concerns and/or complaints regarding the care of you loved one. Ombudsmen are advocates for residents in long-term care facilities.

Contact Angelia Pridgen or Colby Smith at 252-638-3185 or 1-800-824-4648 for assistance.