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SOME ASSISTED LIVING COMMUNITIES FORCED TO PUT VISITATION ON HOLD

Visitation Remains Elusive Due to Rigid Requirements

Clifton Park, NY – July 21, 2020 – On July 10, the New York Department of Health issued a Health Advisory allowing for limited visitation to begin for assisted living communities. Eager to reunite residents with their loved ones, ESAAL immediately began working with its 300 members to begin implementing all of the pre-visititation requirements, including submitting a Safety Plan to the NYS Department of Health and developing a formal visitation plan to share with families and the public.

Unfortunately, some assisted living communities are having to put their reopening plans on hold due to the strict requirements set forth by the DOH. The most challenging requirement is that all visitation, even outdoors, must be shut down immediately – and for 28 days – if a resident or staff member tests positive. With visitation in some communities scheduled to begin this week, in some cases the visitations are halted before they even start because of a positive resident or employee case. This causes extreme dismay and emotional distress for everyone involved.

“ESAAL appreciates the Department of Health’s cautious approach to reopening visitation. The health and safety of residents must be paramount, and clearly this virus is very contagious and dangerous,” comments Empire State Association of Assisted Living’s Executive Director, Lisa Newcomb. “However, the 28-day visitation shut-down rule seems extreme. We are enforcing safety protocols with our members that ensure most visitation will be outdoors, social distancing will be maintained, and facemasks must be worn by all residents and visitors. It is painful for all of us when a resident believes that they are going to see their daughter tomorrow, only to have their hopes dashed at the last moment. The rule causes more harm than good.”

“ESAAL believes there are ways to maintain safety while loosening this rule. It is now our mission to advocate with the state government for a rule that protects, but also makes visitation programs actually feasible,” Newcomb concludes.

About Empire State Association of Assisted Living

Empire State Association of Assisted Living is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to strengthening New York State's assisted living sector and promoting the best interests of providers and residents. Founded in 1979, ESAAL is the only association that exclusively represents the assisted living industry, serving 300 Assisted Living Residences, Adult Homes, Enriched Housing Programs and Assisted Living Programs throughout New York State. These member residences are home to more than 30,000 seniors.

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