



The Beacon

A Newsletter for Long-Term Care Residents

January 2021

Recent Stimulus Payment

Congress passed a new COVID stimulus package in December, and most nursing home residents will receive a \$600 stimulus payment. Payments are being sent via direct deposit, check, or debit card. Debit cards are mailed in white envelopes marked “Money Network Cardholder Services” – **it is not junk mail.**

If you don't know the status of this payment, you can check on the IRS website: <https://www.irs.gov/coronavirus/get-my-payment>. If you cannot navigate that site, ask family, friends, or facility staff to help.

If you suspect that the nursing home received your payment and will not give it to you, please call our office at 877-582-6995 and we will advocate for you. Your stimulus money belongs to you and you can spend it as you wish.



COVID-19 VACCINES IN NURSING HOMES



Residents of long term care facilities, including nursing homes, are in the first group of people (“1A”) eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine in New Jersey. All NJ long-term care facilities have partnered with Walgreens or CVS pharmacies to vaccinate residents, staff, and volunteers.

If your facility has not yet received its first dose of vaccine, it will in the next few weeks. Both available vaccines, Pfizer and Moderna, require two doses spaced a few weeks apart in order to

be fully effective. Neither facilities nor residents can choose which vaccine they receive; this is determined by the CDC and pharmacy, and your entire facility will receive the same vaccine.

The facility must obtain consent from you in order for you to receive the vaccine. For residents who lack decision-making capacity, their guardian or legal representative will be consulted. You should also receive a fact sheet about the vaccine you receive.

The LTCO encourages all residents to receive the vaccine to protect against COVID-19, but you of course have the right to refuse it as you do with any other medical treatment. If you have any questions about the vaccine itself or your facility's process, ask a nurse or social worker, or raise it through your Resident Council group. Staff can easily print information about both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines for you.

Feel free to call the Ombudsman's Office if you have questions or concerns about your facility's vaccination program.

Volunteer Advocate Lahkeisha Leach



“It’s one of the most fulfilling things I’ve ever done.”

Lahkeisha Leach recently marked her first anniversary with the NJ LTCO Volunteer Advocate Program (VAP).

Volunteer Advocates are an essential part of the LTCO team. They solve problems for long-term care residents and ensure that they are treated with dignity and respect.

A U.S. Air Force veteran, Ms. Leach says, “It’s one of the most fulfilling things I’ve ever done.”

When the virus began to affect the residents and staff and extreme isolation measures were put in place in the spring, Volunteer Advocates like Leach were cut off from their weekly in-person visits. The LTCO distributed letters to the facilities on behalf of each volunteer, reassuring residents that advocates would continue to be there for them and encouraged advocates to maintain their weekly contacts.

“My residents and I began having weekly Zoom meetings in order to keep the lines of communication open. Through them, I’ve been able to keep a finger on the daily pulse of what’s going on at my assigned facility, Jefferson Health Care Center in Gloucester, and how everyone was handling this unexpected

isolation,” she recalls. “As with most facilities around the country, our residents were afraid and confused. Many were lonely, depressed, and even a bit angry.”

Leach became the most regular outside contact available to the nursing home’s Resident Council President and Vice President. And her relationship with other residents has deepened during this time. “We’ve gone from only discussing residential issues to discussing life. Not only their fears and frustrations about the pandemic, but also life stories.”

Leach remembers asking her Resident Council President when she last got to speak with her family. “The last time I spoke with family was when you called,” she answered. That was everything for me because it meant that she no longer views me as just a volunteer, but rather as family.”

If there is a Volunteer Advocate in your facility, please feel free to speak to him/her about any concerns you have. If not, please call the LTCO at 1-877-582-6995.

New Jersey Office of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman

Laurie Facciarossa Brewer, LTC Ombudsman

www.NJ.GOV/LTCO

FOLLOW US

