

For Immediate Release

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UPDATE: 17 STATES NOW JOINED AND CDC ANNOUNCES NO MORE MASKS OR SOCIAL DISTANCING INDOORS FOR THE VACCINATED, DOES NOT APPLY TO LONG TERM CARE

(see pg 2 for original release)

March 9, 2021 - In a most exciting and simultaneously disappointing week, two more states have joined the national effort to recognize the one year anniversary of long term care residents in lockdown, however the recent loosening of restrictions by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) does not apply to long term care residents.

On March 8, the CDC updated its guidance to read, "Fully vaccinated people can visit with other fully vaccinated people indoors without wearing masks or physical distancing." The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, which structures its directives based on the CDC, has issued no further updates to the visitation guidance as of the writing of this release.

"Are (long term care) residents not people? Do their lives matter less? Are they any more "protected" by being vaccinated and STILL locked away? When is it enough?", were the questions posed by movement organizer Essential Caregivers Coalition.

According to the National Center for Health statistics, as of 2016 there were 15,600 nursing homes and 28,900 residential care communities, which includes assisted living facilities, memory care centers and even pediatric subacute centers. This Saturday on March 13, the entire population will have lived one year in lockdown isolation. About 4.5 million residents and employees in long-term care facilities have received at least one dose of the vaccine, according to the CDC, including about 2.1 million who have been fully vaccinated.

Maine and Rhode Island are the latest states to join the "Banniversary" movement. Rhode Island will host an Anniversary Gathering, Friday, March 12 at noon at the Rhode Island State House and a candlelight vigil is planned for 5:00pm EST at MillCreek Park in South Portland, ME on Saturday, March 13 to acknowledge the year of lockdown and isolation and honor all that was lost. In addition, an "Honor Walk" has been scheduled in Los Angeles on Saturday at 1pm at the Arcadia Community Regional Park (405 S. Santa Anita Ave., Arcadia) and an Anniversary Gathering will be held in San Francisco on Thursday, March 11 at 10am in front of the SF

Department of Public Health Building at 101 Grove Street. More information about all the state events planned can be found at: <https://www.isolationkills.org/events-2>

****Please note:** Evan Shulman, Director for the Division of Nursing Homes in the Quality, Safety and Oversight Group within the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) will not make an appearance in our webinar scheduled for Wednesday, March 10 at 4pm PST/7pm EST.

The original webinar, “Family Caregiver, Residents’ Rights and Visitation Guidelines” was scheduled to feature Evan Shulman answering questions regarding the introduction of the vaccine and the current status of visitation guidelines as directed by CMS. The webinar featuring Toby Edelman, Senior Policy Attorney with the Center for Medicare Advisory (CMA) and Dr. Candace Kemp, Professor at Georgia State University and Fellow of the Gerontological Society of America will still be aired as they provide valuable information regarding resident rights and the establishment of the essential caregiver designation. The new title of the webinar is now, “Family Caregiving and Residents’ Rights.

LONG TERM CARE RESIDENTS REMAIN IN LOCKDOWN AFTER ONE YEAR; 15 STATES BAN TOGETHER TO CREATE “BANNIVERSARY”, RESTORE RIGHTS

March 3, 2021 - March 8-13, 2021, grassroots advocacy groups the Essential Caregivers Coalition, Caregivers for Compromise, FACE for Seniors, and Nursing Home Lives Matter, with thousands of members across 15 states, will be participating in the “Banniversary”; a week of events coordinated to recognize the one year anniversary of the lockdown of long term care residents. Utilizing the slogan, “Isolation Kills, Too!” groups hope to bring awareness to the current rising death toll of residents in residential healthcare facilities due to “failure to thrive” as a result of social isolation.

On March 13 of 2020, under executive order, each state governor restricted visitation for all long term care facilities (skilled nursing, assisted living, skilled mental health, pediatric subacute centers, etc.). One year later, residents of all ages and abilities in long term care facilities continue to live in lockdown and suffer from being kept apart from their families. Tragically, so many have died alone while in lockdown. These events will serve as a call to action for officials to re-issue the visitation guidance in light of the vaccine and support the federal designation of an essential caregiver. In addition, memorials are planned to honor the lives lost during this tragic year.

While every state will be participating differently, various coordinated online and in person events are planned, including the “Isolation Anniversary in Long Term Care” webinar on March 10 at 7pm EST, featuring a conversation with Evan Shulman, Director for the Division of Nursing Homes in the Quality, Safety and Oversight Group within the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), Toby Edelman, Senior Policy Attorney with the Center for Medicare

Advisory (CMA) and Dr. Candace Kemp, Professor at Georgia State University and Fellow of the Gerontological Society of America. This conversation will focus on why families are more than just visitors, review the rights of residents in long term care and address the issue of the efficacy of the vaccine and its impact on visitation.

“In my state of New Jersey, each week there are more announcements of openings of restaurants, bars, gyms, churches, even sports arenas, all due to the positive case count dropping and the availability of the vaccines,” said Bill Borrelle, founder of FACE for Seniors. “Why has long-term care been left out? The greatest proportion of vaccines have been administered there, and those residents are now protected. If preventing death was the reason for keeping family out before the vaccines, what is the reason now?”

Through weekly calls to action, group leaders have mobilized thousands of residents and family members across the nation to raise funds, mail letters for a yellow envelope campaign and purchase signs in anticipation of this moment for change.

“Caregivers for Compromise is excited to join forces with other national caregiver groups to advocate for so many still in isolation in long term care,” said Mary Daniel, founder. “Together, our voices speak louder for those unable to speak for themselves.”

The week kicks off with the arrival of thousands of letters filled with personal stories and demands for change mailed in yellow envelopes on the desks of the CDC, CMS, state and local officials. Additionally, emails demanding the reissuing of guidance around visitation with consideration of the vaccine will be sent out. Across cities in various states hundreds of “Isolation Kills, Too!” and “Restore Resident Rights in Long Term Care” lawn signs will pop up for a day and then travel to a new location. On March 12, groups will gather in front of their state capitols to speak with legislators and show support for current bills in legislation pertaining to the establishment of an essential caregiver. Finally, on the year anniversary, March 13, families will attend vigils to read the names of those that have passed, share stories of their loss and sit in silence together.

“When it comes to visitation, every state, every county, even every facility is applying different rules,” said Mikko Cook, co-founder of the Essential Caregivers Coalition. “However, one constant remains true: all long term care residents are still suffering in isolation after a year. It is time for their rights to be restored and measures taken so this never happens again.”

Current states participating in the Banniversary include: CA, CT, FL, IL, KY, NC, ND, NJ, NY, PA, TN, TX and WV, with more signing on each day. To learn more about the campaign and to see a schedule of events planned, please visit: www.isolationkills.org.

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