

MENTAL HEALTH RECOVERY DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN LTC SETTINGS:

A GUIDE FOR LTC STAFF



MANY OF OUR RESIDENTS EXPERIENCED INCREASED SOCIAL ISOLATION DURING MANDATED VISITOR RESTRICTIONS AND INFECTION CONTROL PROCEDURES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC. WHAT IMPACT CAN SOCIAL ISOLATION HAVE ON LTC RESIDENTS?

- LONELINESS
- DEPRESSION
- ANXIETY
- SUICIDAL THOUGHTS

- BEHAVIORAL ISSUES
- ACUTE STRESS/PTSD
- IRRITABILITY
- INSOMNIA

- FEAR
- ANGER
- CONFUSION
- EMOTIONAL DISTRESS

WHY ARE SOME LTC RESIDENTS NOW WANTING TO STAY IN THEIR ROOMS EVEN THOUGH VISITOR RESTRICTIONS HAVE BEEN LIFTED? DUE TO THE LENGTH OF TIME THAT THE VISITOR RESTRICTIONS WERE IN PLACE, RESIDENTS DEVELOPED NEW HABITS AND A DAILY ROUTINE. PROLONGED PATTERNS OF SOCIAL ISOLATION CAN BE DIFFICULT TO CHANGE, AND A PERIOD OF RE-ADJUSTMENT WILL LIKELY OCCUR FOR MANY.

WHAT CAN LTC STAFF DO TO HELP?

- OFFER SUPPORT AND LET IMPACTED RESIDENTS KNOW THAT JUST AS THEY ADJUSTED TO THE VISITOR RESTRICTIONS LAST YEAR, THEY WILL BEGIN TO READJUST TO THE “NEW NORMAL” WITH TIME.
- HELP THEM IDENTIFY PERCEIVED BARRIERS TO INCREASING SOCIAL INTERACTION (E.G., ARE THEY NERVOUS TO LEAVE THEIR ROOM, DO THEY HAVE LOW MOTIVATION BECAUSE THEY ARE DEPRESSED, ETC). HELP REMOVE THE BARRIERS.
- IDENTIFY ACTIVITIES THEY ENJOY AND MAKE A PLAN TO INCORPORATE THEM INTO THEIR DAILY ROUTINE, BEGINNING WITH SMALL STEPS SUCH AS ONE-ON-ONE ACTIVITIES INITIALLY AND MOVING INTO SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES WITH TIME.
- FOR ANY RESIDENTS WHO APPEAR TO BE DEPRESSED, ANXIOUS, OR DISPLAYING SYMPTOMS OF OTHER MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS, CONSIDER REFERRING THEM TO PSYCHOLOGY SERVICES TO ASSIST WITH PROVIDING SPECIALIZED TREATMENT FOR THEIR SITUATION.

PSYCHOLOGISTS IN LONG TERM CARE