**Essential Care Giver**

**Policy:** To support the residents physical, emotional, and psychosocial wellbeing through the care of a designated essential care giver.

**Initiation of the essential care giver**

When all other types of visitation have been exhausted and resident has requested an essential caregiver or is experiencing ill effect from visitor restrictions an essential caregiver may be elected to alleviate ill effect of prolonged social distancing.

An application for the essential caregiver will be completed upon inquiry outlining need, scheduling and requirements of the caregiver.

EC visits will be prohibited during a resident 14-day quarantine – exceptions will be made for compassionate care visits.

**Designating the essential caregiver**

If the resident has the capacity to designate the essential caregiver, ask the resident who they want as the essential caregiver. If the resident is unable to make the decision, or is uncertain about or uncomfortable choosing, the facility should work with the resident’s guardian or other legal representative. If family members cannot agree, consider involving the regional ombudsman. Considerations should include a person who was previously actively engaged with the resident or is committed to providing companionship and/or assistance with activities of daily living. The essential caregiver must be at least 18 years old.

**Screening**

The essential caregiver will be screened at the entry door prior to the visit in the same fashion that staff and other visitors are screened. If screening reveals that the essential caregiver has signs and symptoms consistent with COVID-19 or they should be in quarantine the visiting rights will be revoked until the following criteria are met utilizing symptom-based strategy: Exclude from visits until:

* + At least 24 hours have passed *since recovery* defined as resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications **and** improvement in symptoms **and**,
  + At least 10 days have passed *since symptoms first appeared.*

Testing will be required for the essential caregiver at the same frequency as staff for point prevalence testing.

COVID-19 vaccination will be encouraged. The facility will assist the care giver in coordinating.

**PPE**

Essential caregivers are expected to use the same personal protective equipment as staff. This equipment will be provided by the Evansville Care Center.

To maintain proper infection control technique the essential caregiver is not permitted to eat or drink during the visits.

Education on basic infection control practices, PPE usage and Covid-19 will be required through <https://qsep.cms.gov/COVID-Training-Instructions.aspx>. Proof of completion will be required.

**Schedule**

Essential caregiver visits are scheduled for a certain duration of time at a rate and frequency that is predetermined with the essential caregiver, resident and facility’s administrator. Scheduling is essential considering there may be several residents requesting essential caregivers and a limited number of visitors will be considered daily. Scheduling will be reflected within the essential caregiver’s application.

**Environment**

Essential caregiver visits will be conducted only in resident’s room.

The essential caregiver is not permitted in public areas and restroom.

The essential caregiver must remain 6 feet away from staff and other residents at the facility. However, MDH guidance does not set a distance between a resident and their essential caregiver, because many caregiving tasks require a shorter distance.

**Restriction considerations**

Essential caregiver visits may be suspended if the county rate exceeds 10%, shortages of personal protective equipment and essential cleaning and disinfection supplies to care for residents, staffing crisis, facility outbreak status or if the essential caregiver fails to comply with the above listed requirements.

Visits are not supervised, however if during any part of the interaction it is visualized by facility staff that the essential caregiver is not following current protocol, the facility administrator will be notified of the delinquent practice.

If the essential caregiver fails to follow the requirements, the facility’s administrator may deny access. Prior to restriction/revocation, the facility, essential caregiver, and resident should discuss how to mediate concerns. If concerns are unable to be resolved with counseling and education the requirement violations may be cause to end or limit visitation rights.

**Concerns with Essential Caregiver Policy**

Please direct any concerns to Brandon Borgstrom, Administrator or Office of Ombudsman for Long-Term Care at 651-431-2555 or 1-800-657-3591 to request advocacy services.