
Avenues for Advocacy

a newsletter of the Lower Savannah Regional Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program

Lower Savannah Council of Governments' Aging, Disability and Transportation Resource Center

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LTC Ombudsmen Get COVID-19 Vaccine- Staff Should Too!

On January 14, 2021, Lower Savannah LTC Ombudsman Program Staff received the first of two doses of the COVID-19 vaccine. We look forward to joining the LTC facility staff and residents in becoming fully vaccinated to better protect the residents and staff in our region's homes.

The LTCOP Staff sent to each of the fifty-five facilities in our region a short survey to determine when and how many staff and residents are getting vaccinated. The purpose was to find out how many were declining the vaccine. Of the surveys received back, I am happy to see most residents consenting to take the vaccine. If there is an issue with consent for a person unable to consent and without a representative, please call us! I am concerned to see the high number of staff declining the vaccine on their facility administration days. I hope that as more people get the vaccine, many more staff will agree to take the vaccine when the supply is available to the public.

The Toll of COVID-19- Take Care of You!

The extra level of stress that you as caregivers in long term care facilities feel is not lost to the LTC Ombudsman program staff. We all are impacted by COVID-19, but realize as direct caregivers, the impact is especially hard on you. Stress from the grief hits hard. The stress of isolation hits hard. Please be mindful of your own emotional wellbeing to avoid hitting the wall and burning out.

Burnout is serious. Burnout can cause mistakes. Burnout can contribute to us not doing what we should and doing what we shouldn't. Seek guidance and help when you find yourself or see a co-worker in need. The Center for Disease Control website has suggestions and helpful links to help manage stress.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html>

Federal Stimulus Payments- Round Two

The Second Federal Economic Impact Payments (EIP) are out! The method of payment for the second payment may not be the same as the first payment (paper check versus debit card) Residents should be getting their payment soon, but we know many are pending. Each recipient of the EIP will also get a Notice 1444 or 1444-B notifying them the payment has been deposited or mailed. If this notice is received but the payment has not been, take action to report that the payment by check or debit card has not been received.

The status of the EIP can be checked at <https://www.irs.gov/coronavirus/get-my-payment> and clicking on the blue GET MY PAYMENT button. Basic information on the resident is needed to search and includes the resident's social security number, date of birth, street address and zip code on file with SSA/IRS. This same site also provides directions to make a report of a lost, stolen, or undelivered EIP.

Like the first payments, these funds are to be spent or saved at the **residents' direction**. If a resident is not able to manage his own funds or direct the use of the funds, the resident can seek assistance from a staff person to manage, save or spend the funds. These payments are NOT Social Security benefits and are therefore not under the oversight responsibilities of the SSA Representative Payee. However, I encourage you as a facility administrator/operator/owner, to document the receipt of the funds, disbursement, saving, etc. for each resident. Residents who have a representative who manages their personal spending allowance can also be given responsibility for the stimulus funds if the resident is not able to direct the use of their check.

Please be sure to educate the resident and/or their representative that the after twelve months, these funds could be counted as a resource and affect ongoing eligibility for Medicaid or Optional State Supplementation. If you, residents or their representatives have questions, please call Susan or Alanna at the phone numbers listed at the top of page one.

Activity Directors- May is Older American's Month!

Plan Ahead! Every May, the Administration for Community Living (ACL) leads our nation's observance of Older Americans Month. The theme for 2021 is "Communities of Strength." Please consider looking at the activity ideas at www.acl.gov/oam to include in your plans for May activities that include promoting the connections made by your residents that help build powerful communities! Encourage our Resident Council leaders to get involved in planning!

***"Alone, we can do so little; together,
we can do so much." - Helen Keller***



Resident Room Clean up or Clean out- What do you do?



The SC Resident's Bill of Rights (SC Code of Laws, Section 44-81-20, et. Seq.) specifically discusses the resident's rights regarding personal possessions. First, all residents must be "assured security in storing personal possessions...." and "Each resident must be able to keep and use personal clothing and possessions as space permits unless it infringes on another resident's rights." In recent months, issues regarding a resident's possessions were reported to the LTC Ombudsman and addressed.

Each facility must maintain a clean, safe environment and as a result from time to time must encourage and assist a long-term resident clean out or sort their personal belongings. Each facility should have a policy or guidelines that are communicated to the resident or his representative that explains the facility policy regarding personal storage space. When updating and carrying out your policy, please remember the following:

- Properly tag resident clothing and possessions upon admission and as items are added
- Keep a good inventory of possessions and general discretion of clothing.
- Inform the resident if personal clothing and possessions are in excess of the storage space in their room or if they create a hazard in the facility.
- Obtain consent from the resident or representative to clean the resident's personal area.
- Be sure the resident is present when the room is cleaned.
- Never throw anything away that is a personal possession of the resident without the knowledge of and consent of the resident.
- Keep a detailed record of the items removed and where they went- trash, donated, stored, sent home.
- Upon the discharge of the resident from the facility, carefully pack all their clothes, mail, personal items, and toiletries to be taken to their new place of residence or given to family.



Healthy Connections Prime Advocate at SC Dept on Aging

ATTENTION CRCF ADMINISTRATORS and NH BUSINESS OFFICE STAFF

If your residents have **Absolute Total Care, First Choice VIP Care Plus or Molina Dual Options**, they have an insurance benefits advocate at the SC Department on Aging!

A person who is 65 years of age or older and has both Medicare and SC Healthy Connections (Medicaid) is automatically enrolled into one of the Prime plans available in their county of residence. Prime plans combine the benefits of Medicare, Medicaid and prescription drug coverage in one plan. Plans also offer additional services and supports that may not be included in traditional Medicare or Medicaid. It's an advantage plan for persons on Healthy Connections.

Consumers have the right to change plans or opt out of one of the Prime plans. Not every county in our region offers all three plans; therefore, some consumers need to make changes if they move into a facility located in a non-coverage area. A dual eligible resident who resides in a nursing home for long term care is not eligible to enroll in or stay in a Prime plan.

Your residents, their representatives and you can get help and information from the SC Department on Aging's Prime Advocate. Contact the Healthy Connections Prime Advocate at the South Carolina Department on Aging for more information, toll free: 1-844-477-4632.

Please call the Healthy Connections PRIME Advocate for help:

- to understand the plan's benefits and patient's rights.
- to appeal a non-covered service or termination of service.
 - to change plans.
 - to disenroll in the Prime plan.
- to get information about assistance programs in your area.

For more information, please go to www.scdhhs.gov/prime.

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Serving residents in long-term care facilities in Aiken, Allendale, Bamberg, Barnwell,
Calhoun and Orangeburg Counties.

