



California Department of Aging Long-Term Care Facility Access (LTCFA) Policy Workgroup Summary of Studies on the Importance of Visitation and the Impact of Restricted Access on LTCF Residents and Families

*This document summarizes key research on long-term care facility (LTCF) access and visitation. Studies, reports, and other articles included in this document were identified by Manatt Health on behalf of the California Department of Aging and by members of the **LTCFA Policy Workgroup**.*

Research on Social Isolation and Loneliness in LTCFs

Title: “Social Isolation and Loneliness in Older Adults: Opportunities for the Health Care System”

Authors: National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine

Publication: The National Academies Press

Date: 2020

Link: <https://nap.nationalacademies.org/catalog/25663/social-isolation-and-loneliness-in-older-adults-opportunities-for-the>

Summary: This 316-page report “summarizes the evidence base and explores how social isolation and loneliness affect health and quality of life in adults aged 50 and older, particularly among low income, underserved, and vulnerable populations.” It “makes recommendations specifically for clinical settings of health care to identify those who suffer the resultant negative health impacts of social isolation and loneliness and [to] target interventions to improve their social conditions.”

Title: “What Is the Prevalence of Loneliness Amongst Older People Living in Residential and Nursing Care Homes? A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis”

Authors: Claire Gardiner, Pete Laud, Tim Heaton, et al.

Publication: Age and Aging

Date: 2020

Link: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32396600/>

Summary: This systematic review estimated that the prevalence of “severe loneliness” in residential and nursing care homes was 61% (with studies in the review reporting a range of 9% to 81%). It makes recommendations for future studies to “identify which interventions can address loneliness and promote meaningful social engagement to enhance quality of life in care homes.”

Title: “Social Connection in Long-Term Care Homes: A Scoping Review of Published Research on the Mental Health Impacts and Potential Strategies During COVID-19”

Authors: Jennifer Bethell, Katelynn Aelick, Jessica Babineau, et al.

Publication: Journal of the American Medical Directors Association

Date: February 2021

Link: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9186333/>

Summary: This scoping review provides a summary of research linking social connection to mental health outcomes for LTCF residents. Researchers reviewed 133 studies that reported a quantitative measure of social connection in a population of adult residents of LTCFs. Findings from the review

include positive associations between social connection and less depression, reduction in response behaviors among residents with dementia, less anxiety, and less cognitive decline.

Role of Caregivers for LTCF Residents

Title: “Re-Imagining Family Involvement in Residential Long-Term Care”

Authors: Joseph E. Gaugler and Lauren L. Mitchell

Publication: Journal of Post-Acute and Long-Term Care Medicine

Date: December 2021

Link: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8821144/>

Summary: This article reviews current research on the involvement of family in long-term care and “seeks to better understand ... how the COVID-19 pandemic has expedited the need to revisit and re-imagine family involvement in” LTCFs.

Title: “Informal Caregivers Provide Considerable Front-Line Support in Residential Care Facilities and Nursing Homes”

Authors: Norma B. Coe and Rachel M. Werner

Publication: Health Affairs

Date: January 2022

Link: <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/abs/10.1377/hlthaff.2021.01239>

Summary: This descriptive study used data from the Health and Retirement Study (2016) and the National Health and Aging Trends Study (2015). It “found that informal care was common among older adults with functional limitations, whether they lived in the community, a residential care facility, or a nursing home,” and “a higher percentage of individuals in residential care communities and nursing homes are getting assistance with these needs by informal care providers compared to their community-dwelling counterparts.”

Research on the Impact of Restricted Visitation Policies in LTCFs During COVID-19

Title: “State Social Distancing Restrictions and Nursing Home Outcomes”

Authors: Yue Li, Zijing Cheng, Xueya Cai, et al.

Publication: Scientific Reports

Date: January 20, 2022

Link: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8776882/>

Summary: Researchers with the University of Rochester analyzed state social distancing restrictions from June to August of 2020. They found that stronger state social distancing measures were associated with “lower weekly rates of new COVID-19 confirmed cases and related deaths among residents and staff” of LTCFs but were also associated with a “somewhat increased rate of non-COVID-19 mortality among nursing home residents.”

Title: “State Policy Responses to COVID-19 in Nursing Homes”

Authors: Courtney Van Houtven, Katherine Miller, Rebecca Gorges, et al.

Publication: Journal of Long-Term Care

Date: September 20, 2021

Link: <https://journal.ilpnetwork.org/articles/10.31389/jltc.81/#B69>

Summary: This analysis examined 12 states' responses to COVID-19 in LTCFs from March to June 2020. The authors found little research showing that visitors introduced COVID-19 into facilities but noted that this is likely because most states were not allowing LTCF visitors during the first wave of the pandemic.

Title: "Coronavirus Disease 19 (COVID-19) Restrictions and Loneliness Among Residents in Long-Term Care Communities: Data From the National Health and Aging Trends Study"

Authors: Cassandra L. Hua and Kali S. Thomas

Publication: Journal of the American Medical Directors Association

Date: July 2021

Link: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8249689/#bib2>

Summary: This study evaluated data from the 2020 National Health and Aging Trends Study, a nationally representative mail survey regarding older (age ≥65 years) Medicare beneficiaries' experiences during the pandemic, including 234 participants residing in long-term care settings. Researchers with Brown University found that 29% of LTC residents were lonelier during the pandemic than in the weeks prior to the pandemic.

Title: "Excess Mortality in Long-Term Care Residents With and Without Personal Contact With Family or Friends During the COVID-19 Pandemic"

Authors: Rachel D. Savage, Paula A. Rochon, Yingbo Na, MSc, et al.

Publication: Journal of the American Medical Directors Association

Date: December 2021

Link: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8683263/>

Summary: This analysis "evaluates changes in all-cause mortality rates of LTC residents with and without contact with family or friends in Ontario, Canada, from January 1, 2017, to September 30, 2020." Researchers found that "LTC residents without personal contact with family or friends experienced 35% greater excess mortality early in the COVID-19 pandemic relative to residents who had personal contact with family or friends."

Title: "The Adverse Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Nursing Home Resident Well-Being"

Authors: Michael Levere, Patricia Rowan, and Andrea Wysocki

Publication: Journal of the American Medical Directors Association

Date: March 20, 2021

Link: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7980137/>

Summary: Mathematica researchers examined data for 14,000+ residents living in 224 nursing homes in Connecticut in 2020 to assess the impact of the pandemic on the well-being of nursing home residents and found that long-stay residents "experienced a 15% increase in depressive symptoms," "a 150% increase in unplanned substantial weight loss," and "a 6% increase in episodes of incontinence."

Perspectives of Residents and Loved Ones on Restricted Visitation During COVID-19

Title: “The Devastating Effect of Lockdowns on Residents of Long-Term Care Facilities During COVID-19”

Authors: The National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care

Publication: Consumer Voice

Link:

https://theconsumervoice.org/uploads/files/issues/Devasting_Effect_of_Lockdowns_on_Residents_of_LTC_Facilities.pdf

Summary: Consumer Voice surveyed 191 family members of LTCF residents in January 2021 and found that “an overwhelming majority indicated that they had seen decline in both physical and mental conditions” of their loved ones living in LTCFs.

Title: “Limitations on Visitation and Daily Activities Negatively Impact the Lives of Nursing Home Residents: A Survey of Residents”

Authors: The National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care

Publication: Consumer Voice

Date: June 2021

Link:

https://theconsumervoice.org/uploads/files/issues/Current_Visitation_and_Quality_of_Life_for_Residents.pdf

Summary: Consumer Voice surveyed more than 100 nursing home residents in May 2021 about their experience living in an LTCF during the COVID-19 pandemic. 72% of respondents said that visits were limited in length, 50% reported that the frequency of visits was limited, and 79% said there were limits on the number of simultaneous visitors. Consumer Voice concluded that “their answers make clear that life has not gone back to normal; visitation is still very restricted; and residents’ freedoms within the facility remain limited as well.”

Title: “Limitations on Visitation Continue to Harm Nursing Home Residents: A Survey of Residents’ Families”

Authors: The National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care

Publication: Consumer Voice

Date: June 2021

Link:

https://theconsumervoice.org/uploads/files/issues/Limitations_on_Visitation_Continue_to_Harm_Nursing_Home_Residents.pdf

Summary: Consumer Voice surveyed 392 family members of residents in LTCFs in May 2021. It concluded “that families continue to face arbitrary barriers to visitation, such as time and frequency limits, and where the visits take place.”

Title: “COVID-19 Experiences of Relatives of Nursing Home Residents”

Authors: Cristina B. De Rosa, Yanjun Zhou, Amy Lyons, et al.

Publication: Clinical Nursing Research

Date: September 4, 2022

Link: <https://journals.sagepub.com/eprint/QWNDXIHRDVCQUD4UYUZ6/full>

Summary: Researchers at the University of Buffalo School of Nursing conducted interviews with 10 family members of nursing home residents in New York. Key themes from the interviews included that family members “often felt powerless because they had to rely on reports from staff for information about their loved one’s health when visitation was restricted,” “reported finding alternate ways to visit loved ones, such as visits through windows,” and “reported challenges procuring services” for their loved ones.

Additional Sources

LTCFA Policy Workgroup members also submitted the following articles that do not fall into any of the categories above:

- The COVID-19 pandemic’s impact on older adults’ mental health: Contributing factors, coping strategies, and opportunities for improvement
- Not just COVID: Nursing home neglect deaths surge in shadows
- Nursing Home Residents’ Rights
- Psychological and Functional Impact of COVID-19 in Long-Term Care Facilities: The COVID-A Study
- Ombudsman Program in Long-Term Care Facilities
- Understanding Nonprofit and Government Ownership: Evidence from Nursing Homes in the Pandemic
- Re-Integration of Family Caregivers as Essential Partners in Care in a Time of COVID-19