

# Essential Family Caregiver Program

New standard for IDOH-licensed facilities



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Recognizing the critical role family, friends and other outside caregivers (e.g., clergy, volunteers, private personal caregivers) often have in the care and support of residents, the Indiana Department of Health is implementing a new standard regarding the establishment of an Essential Family Caregiver (EFC) program. This initiative will ensure that residents continue to receive the person-centered care they need in the event of future visitation restrictions related to a declared emergency, as well as during the public health emergency. The requirement for all nursing facilities and residential care facilities licensed by the Indiana Department of Health to develop an EFC program is outlined in [Senate Bill 202](#), which passed by the Indiana General Assembly in April.

Strict visitation restrictions were imposed upon long-term care (LTC) facilities during the public health emergency to help prevent and mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Although social distancing and minimizing the number of different contacts are important infection control approaches to keep high-risk LTC residents safe, strategies are needed to combat the unintended consequences of these steps to maintain residents' overall health and well-being. The COVID-19 crisis has exacerbated the challenges of social isolation and loneliness among LTC residents.

While preventing the spread of infectious disease remains a priority, it is recognized that social isolation can have a negative impact on physical and emotional well-being. To ensure that residents of LTC facilities can continue to receive the physical and emotional support from their personal caregivers during mandated visitation restrictions, Indiana has instituted a requirement for all licensed LTC facilities to implement an Essential Family Caregiver (EFC) program (which is similar to the program established via regulatory guidance during the pandemic).

Each resident, or their designated representative, must be provided with information from the facility that outlines their specific EFC program and provides information regarding their process to designate an essential caregiver and the requirements for those appointed. The administrator of the healthcare facility, or a designee, will oversee the program and ensure that all essential caregiver applications are diligently reviewed with the resident's care team prior to approval and that the resident will receive care and treatment in accordance with their preferences and current standards of practice.

You will soon receive additional guidance and resources regarding implementation of the EFC program. For more information, please email the Indiana Department of Health LTC Division at [FamilyOutreach@isdh.in.gov](mailto:FamilyOutreach@isdh.in.gov).