
Guidance for teams regarding notification/preparation for changes in a person's living environment after a nursing home stay during COVID-19.

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This guidance seeks to inform teams about how to address notification/preparation for changes in a person's living environment when they return home after a nursing home stay during COVID-19. Katrina Hotrum-Lopez, Cabinet Secretary for Aging & Long Term Services, has purchased tablets for each nursing facility to enable necessary medical discussions and telehealth visits with outside medical providers, as well as visitation with family members and guardians. At this time, visitors and persons accompanying anyone with support needs in New Mexico's nursing facilities are not allowed in person; please visit <https://www.arcnm.org/> for guidance on how to assess an individual's support needs and request in person support in hospitals or nursing homes during the COVID-19 emergency.

Guidelines for support:

- 1) While someone is in a nursing home (or discharge planning is imminent), the team should "gather" together to discuss individual needs, including notification/preparation for changes in the living environment to which they are returning. Discussion of who the best person (or persons) would be to perform this task should occur, and a "game plan*" should be developed.
- 2) When the change involves the death of a staff member, friend or roommate, notification of the death should come from a trusted member of the team (family member, guardian, BSC, case manager), and should be done in-person. Although it is unlikely that in-person visits will be allowed by the nursing home facility during this time, the team may certainly ask whether this could occur.
- 3) The designated person (or persons) to be involved in notifying an individual of a death should contact the discharge planner/social worker at the facility and discuss the need to notify/prepare the person for coming home. Ask for a teleconference meeting with the individual. Request that their discharge planner/social worker (or another person from the facility, e.g. a nurse or nurse's aide who is trusted by the individual) also be present to offer support/comfort.
 - a. Prior to the notification meeting, discuss potential reactions that the individual might have with the person at the facility, and suggest comforting actions to take if these occur; a BSC, if available, may be a useful resource in identifying these actions. Discuss whether follow up calls/teleconferences need to happen; offer contact information for who to call if needed to address delayed or ongoing reactions. Remember that all of us grieve, in our own timing, and in our own ways! **And that is okay.**
 - b. While every situation and each person is unique, introducing the topic may go something like this (**This is just a suggestion, please see the links below to a couple of websites for more guidelines/ideas**): "We are very glad that you are getting better! We and (name of person from facility) are working hard planning for you to come home soon. [you may want to ask what the person is looking forward to at home]. We want

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you to know about some changes at home. First of all, you will wear a mask leaving here, and when you go doctor's appointments, etc. You have been sick, and now you're getting better, but we need to help you to **keep** feeling better! You remember that your roommate(s) got really sick too; unfortunately, (name) won't be there when you get home because they didn't get better. They passed away (died)."

- c. Make sure that you leave time for any reactions that the person may (or may not) have. After, you may need to debrief with the social worker at the facility and set up times to be available to support the individual in their grief. This should be discussed prior to, and after meeting with the person's team.
- 4) Always remember that each of you on the team (DSP included!) may reach out to BBS staff at any time for support! Our contact information is below.

***Ideas for a "Game Plan"**

Below are some websites that might be helpful for supporting persons with I/DD with their grief; the first gives a great overview of the similarities and differences between persons with I/DD and how they grieve (really there are mostly similarities—death, loss and grief is a very difficult topic for us all!); the second has many ideas related to notifying someone of the death of a loved one—specific basic steps listed below the 2nd link.

<https://www.funeralguide.com/blog/intellectual-disability-grief>

<http://www.breakingbadnews.org/ten-top-tips-for-breaking-bad-news/>

1. [Don't avoid the issue](#)
2. [Anticipate questions – and anticipate a lack of questions](#)
3. [Make sure you understand the question](#)
4. [Be honest \(and admit what you don't know\)](#)
5. [Allow feelings of sadness...](#)
6. [...including your own!](#)
7. [People have a right NOT to know](#)
8. [Don't overdo it](#)
9. [Repeat the information](#)
10. [Get expert advice](#)

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