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New York State Health Facilities Association Statement on New Visitation Guidelines for Nursing Homes

Albany, New York — Stephen Hanse, President and CEO of the New York State Health Facilities Association and the New York State Center for Assisted Living (NYSHFA/NYSCAL), a statewide association representing over 425 long-term care facilities issued the following statement following NYSHFAs delivery of the attached letter to Governor Cuomo and Commissioner Zucker concerning the State’s nursing home visitation and staff testing policies.

“It has been since early March of this year that many nursing home residents throughout New York have been unable to receive visitors in person because of the COVID-19 pandemic. During this time, nursing home residents have been isolated from their loved ones and have suffered dearly as a result of being unable to see the people who mean the most to them.”

“While New York has reduced the number of days a nursing home is prohibited from allowing visitation from 28 days to 14 days following a positive test, the State’s one-size fits all restriction on visitation is negatively impacting the health and well being of residents and their families and loved ones.”

“Specifically, NYSHFA is requesting the State to re-evaluate its current testing and visitation rules and align them with those required by CMS by implementing the following two initiatives:

1. Require nursing home visitors to present a negative COVID-19 test only in counties with Medium (5% - 10%) or High (greater than 10%) COVID-19 positivity rates as encouraged by CMS; and
2. Require nursing home staff to be tested monthly in counties with Low (less than 5%) COVID-19 positivity rates and more frequently in counties with Medium or High COVID-19 positivity rates.”

“These two initiatives safeguard the health and well-being of nursing home residents and will provide clarity, eliminate confusion and dispose of unnecessary impediments that currently prevent residents from seeing their relatives and loved ones.”

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