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Barbara J. Hickert, State Ombudsman

Laura Kelly, Governor

MEMORANDUM

TO: **Regional Ombudsmen and All Certified Ombudsmen Volunteers**

FROM: **Barbara Hickert, Kansas State Long-Term Care Ombudsman**

Date: **March 14, 2020**

RE: **COVID-19 updates**

A. The State LTC Ombudsmen has enacted a virtual visitation policy for all LTC Ombudsmen, effective immediately and until further notification. All LTC Ombudsmen will refrain from entering LTC facilities. All LTC Ombudsmen will switch to "virtual" visiting by phone, email, and web-based technologies.

- **Health & Safety**. This decision has not been made lightly. We recognize that LTC residents are at high-risk during this time and we will continue to provide LTC Ombudsmen services. However, during the coronavirus outbreak in Kansas LTCOP must also innovate and stay nimble in order to protect the health and safety of LTC residents and all LTC Ombudsmen. LTCOP must do its part to slow the spread of this virus while continuing to serve residents and protecting the safety of all LTC Ombudsmen.
- **Temporary policy**. This is a temporary policy. This temporary policy will be revisited on a regular basis.
- **Virtual Visitation Only.** During this time, the facility must provide the ombudsman with other means of communication and privacy with any resident and resident representative by phone, email or video call (if available). Ombudsman should direct such a request to his or her primary contact within the facility, or to the facility administrator or operator.
- **Regional Meetings.** All in person regional training meetings are cancelled until further notice. All ombudsman training and meetings will be conducted via webinar/teleconference.

B. On March 13, 2020 President Trump declared a national emergency. Shortly after CMS released updated guidance for visitation.

- Please see the attached document for details. Please note: The guidance states that all facilities should **restrict** visitation of **all** visitors and non-essential health care personnel, except for certain compassionate care situations, such as an end of life situation.

The situation regarding COVID-19 is still evolving and can change rapidly.