



**Position Statement
March 2020**

For Immediate Release

**Implications of State Health and Social Distancing Orders Related to COVID 19 on
Individuals with Disabilities in Long-Term Care Facilities**

The Ivey Administration issued a state health order on March 19, portions of which will have tremendous impact on individuals with special healthcare needs. Alabama's 12,835 individuals who reside in extended care facilities are now prohibited from having community visitations except in end-of-life situations. This is particularly impactful for the 1,303 facility residents who are under the age of 65. Many of these individuals are admitted to facilities based solely on having a self-care disability without another diagnosis.

In a review of literature regarding family involvement in long-term resident care, Gaugler (2005), concluded that family involvement has been continually linked to positive resident outcomes, including earlier discharge for short stay patients and longer life expectancy post admission for long-term residents.

Recommendations

- ADPH should direct facility social work staff to develop alternative means of visitation for resident use during the social distancing period (FaceTime through iDevices or equivalent).
- For individuals with Intellectual Disabilities (ID) or Severe and Persistent Mental Illness (SMI), for whom the use of technology may be too complex or otherwise nonproductive, visits from immediate family or other support networks should be permitted on a compassionate care basis. Under such circumstances, visitors should be educated on and expected to comply with COVID 19 Precautions for Individuals with Disabilities ([Click Here](#))

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References:

Alabama Select Network (2020). Monthly ICN utilization reports. Retrieved 3/4/20

Gaugler J. E. (2005). Family involvement in residential long-term care: a synthesis and critical review. *Aging & Mental Health*, 9(2), 105–118.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13607860412331310245>