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Dear Colleague,

The Arc of New Jersey, in partnership with the New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities (NJCDD) and other groups, is requesting that the New Jersey Department of Health announce a policy, quickly, to allow individuals with I/DD who are hospitalized to have a support person with them during their hospitalization. The message below from the NJCDD provides all of the details on this urgent advocacy effort. We hope that you will take a moment to express your view on the importance of allowing individuals with I/DD who are hospitalized to have assistance from a support person.

**This is one of many emails that The Arc of New Jersey is distributing in an effort to help individuals with I/DD, their families, and staff to be safe and healthy throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. To see other emails that The Arc of New Jersey has distributed on this topic, please go to <https://www.arcnj.org/information/covid-19-updates-information.html>.**

Thank you.  
Bev

**Beverly Roberts**  
**Director, Mainstreaming Medical Care**  
**The Arc of New Jersey**  
**985 Livingston Avenue**  
**North Brunswick, NJ 08902**  
**Direct line and fax: 732.246.2567**  
**[www.mainstreamingmedicalcare.org](http://www.mainstreamingmedicalcare.org)**



**April 11, 2020**  
**For Immediate Release**

**HOSPITAL VISITATION ADVOCACY**  
**TAKE ACTION NOW**

The New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities (NJCDD) and our partner advocacy agencies have listened to your concerns regarding hospital visitation policies for your loved ones.

As loved ones of individuals with disabilities, our days and nights are getting longer while our fears escalate. NJCDD would like to make you aware of recent guidance released from The New York State Department of Health on April 10, 2020.

The New York State guidance allows hospitals to permit visitors when their support has been determined essential to patient care.

You can act now! Ask Governor Phil Murphy to immediately adopt guidance directing all New Jersey hospitals to allow a support person to remain with our loved ones when a support person has been determined essential to patient care.

Send your emails to [Kyoko.coco@njcdd.org](mailto:Kyoko.coco@njcdd.org). Keep your email short. Tell us in a few sentences why the Governor should issue this guidance. Tell him why a support person must remain with your loved one if hospitalized for COVID-19 or any other illness during this pandemic.

NJCDD will gather your emails and immediately send them to Paul Aronsohn, the Ombudsman. He will ensure they are delivered directly to Governor Murphy.

See the excerpt below from the New York guidance. The entire [New York guidance is available here](#).

## **Health Advisory: COVID-19 Updated Guidance for Hospital Operators Regarding Visitation**

Effective immediately, hospitals must suspend all visitation except for patient support persons, or family members and/or legal representatives of patients in imminent end-of-life situations. Hospitals are required to permit a patient support person at the patient bedside for:

- Patients in labor and delivery;
- Pediatric patients;
- **Patients for whom a support person has been determined to be essential to the care of the patient (medically necessary) including patients with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities and patients with cognitive impairments including dementia.**

**During this unprecedented time, a support person for the patients described above may be critical to avoid negative health outcomes unrelated to the COVID-19 public health emergency.** Given the risk of COVID-19 in healthcare settings, healthcare providers should thoroughly discuss the potential risks and benefits of a support person's presence at the bedside with both the patient (if 18 years of age or older) and the support person. For those patients and support persons who through informed decision making determine a support person at the bedside is essential for the patient's care, hospitals should develop protocols for ensuring a support person at bedside minimizes risk of potential COVID-19 transmission, including when the patient is confirmed or suspected to have COVID-19.

- **For patients for whom a support person has been determined to be essential to the care of the patient (medically necessary) including patients with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (I/DD), and patients with cognitive impairments including dementia, the Department considers one support person at a time as essential to patient care in the emergency room or during hospitalization.**

**New York Hospital Visitation Guidance**

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**PO BOX 700, TRENTON, NJ 08625 | 800-792-8858 | [NJCDD.ORG](http://NJCDD.ORG)**

**The New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities  
20 West State Street, 6th Floor  
Trenton, NJ 08625-0700 - United States  
Telephone: 6096333782**