



RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT RESOURCES FOR NURSING HOMES

[Michigan.gov/Coronavirus](https://www.michigan.gov/Coronavirus)

Engaging nursing home residents in meaningful and person-centered activities, especially while physical distancing, is critically important to their quality of life. Here are some recommendations to consider implementing with residents to minimize the effects of social isolation and keep them mentally stimulated during COVID-19. Please follow current Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) – (www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html) and State of Michigan ([Michigan.gov/Coronavirus](https://www.michigan.gov/Coronavirus)) guidelines when supporting nursing home residents, including maintaining a physical distance of 6 feet, and disinfecting items prior to bringing them to nursing homes and residents' rooms.

Activities Requiring Limited or No Tech Skills

General Ideas: Encourage residents to read books or newspapers, play individual card games, work on crossword or small table puzzles, take walks or sit outside for short periods, decorate doors and windows with hearts of hope or other positive messages of encouragement and support, or decorate areas with holiday/seasonal-themed items. Suggest that residents listen to their favorite music or watch a new show or movie on TV.

During the winter months, residents may enjoy planting seeds and nurturing seedlings to plant in an outdoor garden in the spring, crocheting, knitting, crafting, or making blankets for NICU babies or pets.

Visit the National Consumer Voice—Staying Connected website for more resident engagement ideas.

<https://theconsumervoic.org/events/2020-residents-rights-month/staying-connected>

Local Library Services: Assist residents in registering with the local library for a library card. Nursing homes may also register for an organizational card (called institutional card) that residents may use. Libraries will mail books, including large print books, audio books, and/or music/movies (CDs) to residents.

Residents may access various digital books, magazines, music, movies/travel videos, and newspapers via their cell phones, tablets, or computers. They may even sign up for

“online” trivia on various topics with other library members. Residents or their families/friends/nursing home staff may also order these items for curbside pickup.

Some libraries will set up book nooks within nursing homes and regularly update the options. A mobile library may be available to stop at nursing homes. Contact your local library for resources and ideas.

Additionally, residents may wish to start a **book club** and meet (while physically distancing) to discuss the book.

Pen Pals: Work with local groups to develop a pen-pal program for residents. Seek pals from faith-based and culturally diverse organizations, veterans, school groups (especially those needing community service hours), Boy Scout or Girl Scout troops, fraternities or sororities, fraternal orders, etc.

One nursing home took photos of residents (with consent) and created a poster requesting pen pals that was uploaded on the facility’s website. Some residents are now corresponding with people across the world. Pen pals can communicate through the text messaging, emails, or mail.

Physically-Distanced Activities: Promote window visits with family, friends, neighbors, volunteers, and pets. Residents, especially those living with advanced dementia, may enjoy adopting an animatronic pet. One Michigan nursing home staff member brought his horse to the facility to visit residents via their windows!

Spontaneously begin a staff and resident sing along with a theme or celebrate birthdays and holidays with karaoke in the hallways. Have a Mardi Gras parade (outdoors and physically distanced) with children/families showing their costumes or have a small band or dance group perform (outdoors and physically distanced).

Ideas for Resident Councils

CD/Book Club: The nursing home resident council could offer to host a resident CD/book swap program.

Share/Drop Off: Councils may also urge residents to pass along used books, games, or puzzles that have been cleaned and offer to rotate these items with other residents. Council representatives may collaborate with nursing home staff to ensure items are wiped down as appropriate. Items sitting on shelves in closets for months or years are unlikely to be contaminated unless recently handled.

Ask family and friends to bring items such as fabric, paint, and various craft supplies (for sewing, knitting, and wood working projects).

Write and send notes to family and friends. Hoopla can be downloaded on a Kindle or a cell phone, tablet, or computer, www.hoopladigital.com, using a library card. This website offers free online audio books, movies, music videos, and TV shows. Once downloaded, internet access may not be needed to read/watch/listen.

Many older adults are members of AARP, which offers an array of information, games, or support groups that older adults may find useful www.aarp.org.

Telephone Communications

Telephone Calls: Encouraging residents to place and receive phone calls with family, friends, neighbors, and other residents to check in with them is a great way to stay connected. Hearing a friendly voice can help reduce anxieties during this time. Residents do not have to talk about health issues or isolation. These calls do not need to be marathon sessions on the phone. Fifteen minutes can do a lot to mitigate social isolation. Nursing home staff may ask residents “is there a family member or friend you are missing who could be contacted?”

Telephone Reassurance or Comfort Line Program: Contact volunteer-based programs that match volunteers with older adults who are seeking additional companionship through phone calls. This is a good alternative if residents do not have someone to call.

Find out if your community has a program by contacting one of the agencies/organizations below:

- Area Agency on Aging (AAA) or call 2-1-1 for information - see Michigan.gov/AASA for a list of AAAs
- Friendly Caller Program for LGBTQ+ with SAGE Metro Detroit - www.sagemetrodetroit.org/friendly-caller-program/ or call 248-567-2363
- AARP’s Friendly Voices - aarpcommunityconnections.org/friendly-voices/
- Mental Health Resources—Stay Well on the Michigan.gov Coronavirus website - Michigan.gov/StayWell
- Headspace - www.headspace.com/mi

Technology Options

Cell/Smart Phones and Internet Access: Provide residents who need assistance using the many features available such as sending text messages, accessing emails or the internet, organizing electronic photos, or set up video chats.

If the cell phone plan allows, urge them to play games or to watch YouTube concerts, movies, or how-to videos to learn new skills at www.youtube.com. Send residents videos of something of interest such as a new travel video, hobby video, video of their grandchildren/pets, or a news clip.

Assist residents in safely connecting to Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook. Residents may share photos of their doors and windows decorated with hearts, etc. to be supportive of others during COVID-19.

Virtual Classes: Encourage residents to register for free virtual classes. Some examples could include cell/smart phone/tablet use, video conferencing, or email and technology use. Social hours and exercise are also offered, for example, through the *GetSetUp* program at www.getsetup.io/partner/michigan for adults 60+ and sponsored by the Michigan Health Endowment Fund until April 2021. Classes through *GetSetUp* are taught by experts who understand the challenges residents may encounter. This new partnership allows older adults to stay healthy, active, and connected while practicing physical distancing. Join the New Member Orientation to get started and use the coupon code: **MichiganHealth** when registering.

Technology For Those with Computers and Internet Access: Suggest residents establish communication links in their area by email blasts to a subdivision mailing list, a faith-based mailing list, or any other group mailing list you can think of such as clubs, hobby/sports groups, fraternities, sororities, etc. Organize a Zoom/Skype/Teams virtual get-together for a coffee break, lunchtime, or evening cheer or give them the web addresses/links to virtual museum tours/field trips or concerts. Some suggested sites are:

- Smithsonian Museum Virtual Tours: naturalhistory.si.edu/visit/virtual-tour
The Smithsonian, National Museum of Natural History virtual tours allow visitors to take self-guided, room-by-room tours of select exhibits and areas within the museum.
- National World War II Virtual Field Trip: www.nationalww2museum.org/virtual-field-trips
An interactive, fast-paced virtual field trip:
- United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Virtual Learning and Teaching: www.ushmm.org/teach/online-tools-for-learning-and-teaching
- Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund Virtual Tour: www.vvwf.org
- *Travel and Leisure* 12 Virtual Museum/Gallery Tours: www.travelandleisure.com/attractions/museums-galleries/museums-with-virtual-tours
(Natural History Museum, British Museum, National Gallery of Art-Washington, D.C., The Louvre Paris, etc.)

- Aquarium/Zoo Virtual Tours throughout the U.S.: www.apartmenttherapy.com/aquariums-zoos-animal-live-streams-36736902
- Philadelphia Orchestra live performance of “BeethovenNOW: Symphonies 5 & 6”: <https://www.philorch.org/performances/special-performances/live-stream/>.
- Ann Arbor Symphony Orchestra (A²SO) Virtual Concerts: a2so.com/ Offers group tickets for various concerts which currently are \$250 per concert. Once purchased, nursing homes may show the concert(s) as often as residents would like until June of 2021. The A²SO virtual concert series includes Michigan-made music and world-class artists. [Click here to explore each concert and to purchase group tickets.](#) To watch a sample of the A²SO concerts, [click here](#) to experience a sample concert performed by the A²SO Principal Cellist Caroline Kim, or [here](#) for an October concert featuring the music of Brahms.

Assistive Technology

Hands-Free Communication: Residents may purchase a hands-free, voice-activated smart speaker like an Echo Dot www.amazon.com/Echo-Dot/dp/B07FZ8S74R. When connected to the internet and the Alexa app (downloaded through Google Play or App Store), residents may make phone calls, play music or games such as trivia, or check the weather, time, and news, etc. The advantage to this is residents may program the speaker with their families’/friends’ phone contact information and ask Alexa to call using their names.

Residents who are eligible for Medicaid may be able to access Amazon Prime at a reduced rate, which includes the required Alexa app for the voice-activated speaker to work. www.amazon.com/b?ie=UTF8&node=16256994011

Equipment to Support Communication (Purchasing Cell/Smart Phones, Voice-Activated Smart Speakers, Tablets/Portable Stands/Long Charging Cords): Residents may be able to purchase a cell phone. Another cost-effective option could be families or friends add the resident to their own telephone service plan. Computers or tablets may also be purchased for residents to access entertainment through the internet. Residents may wish to use their own personal funds or personal needs allowance to purchase communication devices of their choosing. Nursing homes may purchase a portable stand that securely holds the tablet or computer to assist residents in talking with their families, friends, neighbors, or faith-based friends without needing staff assistance to secure the device during use.

General Ideas to Engage Residents with Limited Cognition Including Dementia and Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities

Listening to Music, Dancing, Animatronic Pets, etc.: Nursing home staff may engage residents with limited cognition including dementia and intellectual or developmental disabilities in different types of therapy including massage, music, touch, and aroma—while wearing masks and gloves.

Brushing residents' hair or massaging their hands may be calming and help them feel connected and engaged, depending on their personal preferences. Using residents' favorite scented soaps or shampoos in the shower may help them feel relaxed. Engage the resident in their favorite music and encourage dance-like movements appropriate to the residents' physical abilities. Engage residents in a commonly known song or residents' favorite songs while providing care. All will enjoy the fun!

Adopting an animatronic pet (joyforall.com) may be a great way for residents to feel needed and connected during the isolation (be sure to not let the batteries run out and be sure residents do not become overwhelmed with their new "pet").

Other Important Information

Telehealth: Many physicians' offices are offering appointments via telephone, Skype, Zoom, or Doxy links during COVID-19. Contact your health provider for information. Additionally, many health insurance companies are making exceptions to requiring face-to-face visits during COVID-19 - please check with your insurance provider. To reduce the risk of exposure, **Medicare** has expanded its coverage of telehealth services. The expanded services provide access to medical professionals from a wider range of communication devices, such as your smartphone, tablet, and computer. To find out more, please visit www.medicare.gov/coverage/telehealth or call the Michigan Medicare Medicaid Assistance Program (MMAP) at 800-803-7174.

Report Abuse, Neglect, Exploitation, and Potential Scams

Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation:

- Report Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation by calling 855-444-3911.

Scams:

- Report potential scams and price-gouging to the Attorney General's Consumer Protection team by calling 877-765-8388 or filing a complaint on line: www.Michigan.gov/AG/0,4534,7-359-82915_82919_86407---,00.html