

Dear Judy,

I am sending this email in regards to visitation in our long term care facilities. I have a family member in St Benedict's in Dickinson.

She will be 97 in April. She is living her last days unable to see family. She contracted COVID 19 in October and made it through. Even though she has had it we are still unable to visit except through her window. Fortunately we have had some nice days to stand outside but it is still chilly.

Our elderly should be able to make their own decisions as to whether they want to see family or not. She has told us she is living her last days in a small room. She is depressed and continually tells us she just wants to die rather than to live like this. It will be depression that takes her life before an illness does. Not only is she depressed but anxiety gets the best of her when she can't hear on the phone and we do our best to repeat what we are saying. Being face to face she can read your lips and we can see by the look on her face that she knows what we said.

The fact that she had COVID-19 in October and was able to recover is another reason that we should be allowed to visit her inside.

I work at Dickinson State University and have students in my office that work at the nursing home. There is no difference between them going in her room to assist her than there would be for me to take the same necessary precautions and see her.

Over the summer our kids and grandsons were here from Fargo. Our adult children were able to schedule an outdoor visit but our grandsons were not allowed because they weren't over 18. That broke her heart. That would have been therapy for her to see them. What difference does it make if they keep social distance and wear a mask just like adults.

Since there are no longer outdoor visits we have taken them to her window so she can see them. Our grandchildren's last memories of their great-grandma will be her crying as they tried to visit her through the window. I would rather them remember her soft hands and hugs. And being able to spend time playing cards with her. (Which playing cards is therapy to keep her mind active.)

All we worry about is how much money the facility gets from the government by putting these inconsistent rules in place.

I thank you for your time and hope to see support for our elderly.

Laurie Heick

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