



## ENGAGEMENT & ACTIVITY RESOURCES FOR NURSING HOME RESIDENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES AND FRIENDS

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

For residents living in a nursing home, participating in meaningful, person-centered, social activities, while keeping a physical distance from others during COVID-19, is very important to residents' social, mental, and emotional health and quality of life. Here are some recommendations you can do for yourself, with fellow residents, or with a loved one. Please follow current Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) ([www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html)) and State of Michigan ([Michigan.gov/Coronavirus](https://www.michigan.gov/Coronavirus)) guidelines including maintaining a physical distance of 6 feet and disinfecting items received or given to others.

### Activities Requiring Limited or No Tech Skills

**General Ideas:** Residents (with help from family members or friends as needed) may choose to do the following:

- 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
- Decorate areas with holiday-/seasonal-themed items
- Listen to her/his favorite music or watch a new show or movie on TV

During the winter months, residents may:

- Plant seeds and nurturing seedlings to plant in an outdoor garden in the spring
- Crochet or Knit
- Do crafts
- Make blankets for NICU babies or pets

For more ideas, visit the National Consumer Voice—Staying Connected website. [theconsumervoice.org/events/2020-residents-rights-month/staying-connected](https://theconsumervoice.org/events/2020-residents-rights-month/staying-connected)

**Local Library Services:** Residents (with help from family members, friends, or nursing home staff as needed) may consider the following:

- Register with the local library for a library card or use the nursing homes' organizational library cards (called institutional cards) if they have one

- Use the library card to have books, including large print books, audio books, music/movies (CDs), mailed to you or your loved one
- Access various digital books, magazines, music, movies/travel videos, and newspapers on a cell phone, tablet, or computer
- Sign up for “online” trivia on various topics with other library members. Family members, friends or nursing home staff may also order these items for curbside pickup
- Ask libraries to set up book nooks within the 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
- Start a **book club** and meet (while physically distancing) to discuss the book

**Pen Pals:** Residents (with help from family members, friends, or nursing home staff as needed) may be interested in participating in a pen-pal program. Seek pals from:

- Faith-based and culturally diverse organizations
- Veterans organizations
- 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 text messaging, emails, or mail.

**Physically-Distanced Activities:** Engage in physically distanced visits such as:

- Window visits with family, friends, neighbors, volunteers, and pets
- Adoption of an animatronic pet (this may be especially helpful for residents living with advanced dementia)
- Try unique ideas—one Michigan nursing home staff member brought his horse to the facility to visit residents via their windows
- Spontaneously begin a resident and staff sing along with a theme or celebrate birthdays and holidays with karaoke in the hallways
- Plan a Mardi Gras parade (outdoors and physically distanced) with children/families showing their costumes or have a small band or dance group perform (outdoors or indoors in small groups of 10 or less and physically distanced)

### **Ideas for Resident Councils**

**CD/Book Club:** Nursing home resident councils could offer to host a resident CD/book swap program.

**Share/Drop Off:** The resident council may also urge residents to:

- Pass along used books/games/puzzles that have been cleaned and offer to rotate these items with other residents
- Collaborate with nursing home staff to ensure items are wiped down as appropriate - items sitting on shelves in closets for months/years are unlikely to be contaminated unless recently handled
- Ask family and friends to bring items like fabric, paint, and various craft supplies (for sewing, knitting, and wood working projects)
- Hoopla can be downloaded at [www.hoopladigital.com](http://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)
- Check AARP for information at [www.aarp.org](http://www.aarp.org)—many older adults are members of AARP, which offers an array of information, games, or support groups, that older adults may find useful

### **Telephone Communications**

**Telephone Calls:** Placing and receiving 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:** Residents and their families and friends may 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](http://Michigan.gov/AASA) for a list of AAAs
- Friendly Caller Program for LGBTQ+ with SAGE Metro Detroit [www.sagemetrodetroit.org/friendly-caller-program](http://www.sagemetrodetroit.org/friendly-caller-program) or call 248-567-2363
- AARP’s Friendly Voices - [aarpcommunityconnections.org/friendly-voices](http://aarpcommunityconnections.org/friendly-voices)
- Mental Health Resources—Stay Well on the Michigan.gov Coronavirus website - [Michigan.gov/StayWell](http://Michigan.gov/StayWell)
- Headspace - [www.headspace.com/mi](http://www.headspace.com/mi)

## Technology Options

**Cell/Smart Phones and Internet Access:** Residents may ask other nursing home residents or staff, family, or friends for assistance with guidance on safely using the many features available such as how to:

- Send text messages
- Access emails or the internet
- Organize their electronic photos
- Set up video chats

If residents' cell phone plans allow:

- Play games
- Watch YouTube concerts, movies, or how-to videos to learn new skills at [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)
- Ask their resident council, fellow residents or nursing home staff, and family or friends to send them videos of something of interest such as a new travel video, hobby video, video of their grandchildren/pets, or a news clip
- Connect to Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook
- Share photos of their doors and windows decorated with hearts, etc. to be supportive of others during COVID-19.

**Virtual Classes:** Residents may wish 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](http://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:** Residents may ask to be added to email blasts via their past homeowner groups, subdivision mailing lists, faith-based mailing lists, or any other group mailing list you such as clubs, hobby/sports groups, fraternities, sororities, etc. Residents and those who support residents (family/friends/fellow residents, and/or nursing home staff) may 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 suggestions are:

- Smithsonian Museum Virtual Tours: [naturalhistory.si.edu/visit/virtual-tour](http://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](http://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](http://www.ushmm.org/teach/online-tools-for-learning-and-teaching)
- Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund Virtual Tour: [www.vvfw.org](http://www.vvfw.org)
- *Travel and Leisure* 12 Virtual Museum/Gallery Tours: [www.travelandleisure.com/attractions/museums-galleries/museums-with-virtual-tours](http://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](http://www.apartmenttherapy.com/aquariums-zoos-animal-live-streams-36736902)
- Philadelphia Orchestra live performance of “BeethovenNOW: Symphonies 5 & 6”: [www.philorch.org/performances/special-performances/live-stream/](http://www.philorch.org/performances/special-performances/live-stream/)
- Ann Arbor Symphony Orchestra (A<sup>2</sup>SO) Virtual Concerts: [a2so.com/](http://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 A<sup>2</sup>SO 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 A<sup>2</sup>SO concerts, [click here](#) to experience a sample concert performed by the A<sup>2</sup>SO 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](http://www.amazon.com/Echo-Dot/dp/B07FZ8S74R). When connected to the internet and the Alexa app (purchased through Amazon Prime), 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](http://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. A Grandpad tablet - [www.grandpad.net](http://www.grandpad.net) is one option, which older adults find

easy to use. 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.:** Residents with limited cognition including dementia and intellectual/developmental disabilities may be interested in different types of therapy including massage, music, touch, and aroma—while wearing masks and gloves. Family/friends/nursing home staff may brush residents’ hair or massage their hands, which may be calming and help residents to feel connected and engaged, depending on their personal preferences. Residents may like to use their favorite scented soaps or shampoos in the shower to relax. They may enjoy listening to their favorite music and participating in dance-like movements appropriate to the residents’ physical abilities. Residents may enjoy singing commonly known songs or their favorite songs while receiving care. All will enjoy the fun! Adopting an animatronic pet 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](http://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 rice-gouging to the Attorney General's Consumer Protection team by calling 877-765-8388 or filing a complaint online at [www.Michigan.gov/AG/0,4534,7-359-82915\\_82919\\_86407---,00.html](http://www.Michigan.gov/AG/0,4534,7-359-82915_82919_86407---,00.html)