



ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE of PENNSYLVANIA COURTS

News for Immediate Release

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PA Supreme Court's Advisory Council on Elder Justice in the Courts Urges Enhanced Protection of Older People during COVID-19 Pandemic

HARRISBURG — The Pennsylvania Supreme Court's Advisory Council on Elder Justice in the Courts issued a statement today, calling on all Pennsylvanians to help protect the rights of residents in long-term care facilities throughout the ongoing pandemic.

In Pennsylvania, there are 1,100 long-term care facilities with known Covid-19 cases.*

"Since the first documented cases of COVID-19, under the leadership of Governor Wolf and Secretary Levine, action was taken to develop policies and procedures to track, treat, and prevent the virus from spreading, and ongoing efforts and collaboration among state agencies continue," said Senior Judge Paula Francisco Ott, chair of the Advisory Council. "Settings which were impacted the most included long-term care facilities where there were 32,687 cases, many persons were infected, and 5,860 died.* Over the last eight months, the Commonwealth has responded to this crisis by increasing testing and building stocks of protective personal equipment. As numbers of cases once again surge, we must keep our eyes on this vulnerable population and continue to address any gaps. The Governor's Office, the Department of Health, the Department of Human Services and the Department of Aging are meeting every other week with advocates."

In its statement, the Council urged stakeholders to immediately consider recommendations with respect to the care of older people in Pennsylvania's nursing and long-term care facilities outlined in the [PA Advocates Report](#) recently issued by a coalition of advocates for older persons and persons with disabilities.

Among these recommendations is one that calls for the resumption of on-site access to residents by those who are legally required to protect and assist with decision-making, such as attorneys, counsel, fiduciaries, agents, and guardians, etc. Social isolation is known to be especially detrimental to older people.

"Our statement reflects that the Advisory Council on Elder Justice in the Courts recognizes the need for Pennsylvania to promptly address the extraordinary challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic that are severely impacting vulnerable older Pennsylvanians," said Senior Judge Ott. "Consistent with the recommendations in the PA Advocates and Elder Law Task Force Reports, the Advisory Council is urging all elder care and elder justice stakeholders to provide the necessary access and accommodations to assist older people in protecting their welfare and securing their legal rights."

**State Data and Policy Actions to Address Coronavirus, Covid-19 Metrics by State as of 11/12/20, Kaiser Family Foundation (www.KFF.org)*

[NOTE: THE ABOVE STATEMENT REPRESENTS THE VIEWS OF THE ADVISORY COUNCIL ON ELDER JUSTICE IN THE COURTS AND DOES NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT THE OFFICIAL VIEWS OF THE SUPREME COURT OF PENNSYLVANIA.]

Read the full statement [here](#).

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