

OFFICE OF THE LONG-TERM CARE OMBUDSMAN

EST. WITHIN THE PA DEPARTMENT OF AGING

July 17, 2020

Addressing social isolation: AARP phones delivered to nursing home residents



In this key public private project with AARP Pennsylvania, the PA Department of Aging through the Office of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman shipped 107 cell phones and six Kindle tablets to targeted nursing homes across the commonwealth to connect residents with family and friends. These homes were selected because of the presence of PA Empowered Expert Residents or PEERs, who are residents trained in advocacy and complaint resolution by the PA Office of the LTC Ombudsman.

Carleen Arlsberg, above, and Lorraine Andersen, right, are residents at a Montgomery County nursing home. They wished to express their appreciation for the delivery of cell phones to their facility.



Here are some of the preliminary responses:

"We have had 10 calls for 10 residents so far. The residents love the phone! We appreciate the generosity of AARP Pennsylvania!" – **Erie County**

Tablets are being used as a group activity for the residents, music, reading the newspaper, playing games and reading a book to the residents. No phone calls have been made to the residents' families on the tablets. – **Jefferson County**

This phone has been used by 25 residents that were in the COVID unit; they did not have a cordless phone or Ipad in the unit. Now, two PEERs and about 20 residents use the phone. – **Lackawanna County**

This phone is used by about 20 residents; staff were previously using their phone to call family members for the residents. They do have a cordless phone. This (AARP) phone helps get more residents connected to family. – **Lackawanna County**

Two PEER and several other residents use the phone to contact family with the assistance of activity staff. Each unit has a cordless phone which is often not available or left in a resident room with a low battery, needing to be charged. This phone is more available for residents' use. – **Lackawanna County**

The resident has not called his sister yet, but said he will call her tonight. He told his brother about his phone. No other residents have used the phone yet. – **Lancaster County**

The social worker is in charge of phones a record of numbers of residents that have used the phones. She commented that residents are delighted to have two phones that can be shared and are more readily available for them to call their loved ones. – **Lawrence County**

The social worker reports approximately 10 residents have used the phone and were very good about returning it after use. The phone has been very helpful. – **Lebanon County**

The social worker reports approximately four (4) residents have benefitted from the use of the phone. They're very appreciative of the ombudsman program and AARP for the gift. – **Lebanon County**

The individual that was to receive the phone is no longer there. Facility administration is working on who to give it to, and will inform the local ombudsman when they do give it out. – **Lycoming County**

This phone is being utilized for window visits to allow residents to talk to their families. – **Monroe County**

The phone has been utilized by two different residents. Both residents were able to speak to a family member that live in other states. – **Monroe County**

Resident No. 1 has used the phone to speak to family/daughter regularly. She is currently out of minutes and phone is with activities director, but they are aware more phone cards are coming. Resident No. 2 uses the phone regularly to speak with her family. The family is VERY thankful for the phone and being able to stay in touch with their loved one as often as they'd like. The resident states she was even able to a video chat with them. Resident No. 3 also speaks with her family regularly, but says it is hard for her to hear due to background noise at the nursing home. – **Northumberland County**

We haven't kept count as to how many residents are able to use the phone, but they are VERY appreciative of having another device to contact family and friends. During the call, it was mentioned that the downside was the phone is only a "monthly" type. It was at that point that I was happy to report that three additional cards – with three months of service – are on the way, along with the lens cleaners, and pop socket. The local ombudsman spoke with the activity director, who is safeguarding the phone. He said the facility also purchased two more phones for each nursing unit, so they are on "phone overload" right now. But he was VERY excited at the prospect of three more months of service on our phone and said the residents are are also doing Face Time and Skype, but the phones help a GREAT deal for those who do not wish to use the other outreach options. – **Schuylkill County**

The local ombudsman reports that one resident has begun using the phone. Several schedules/opportunities for Zoom and Skype were being utilized. The activity director said the facility greatly appreciates the extra help. Social Work will be reminding residents of PEER phone availability at their next council meeting. – **Tioga County**

The resident said she was so grateful to have the phone so she can contact people much easier. The phone has been a great asset to her to reach family and keep her less isolated. – **York County**