



New York State Assembly
1984 - 2004

Ronald C. Tocci
Veterans Affairs Chairman
Emeritus

Commissioner Veterans Affairs
2005 - 2007

Ronald C. Tocci, Commissioner – Westchester County Veterans Agency

The most vulnerable of all constituents we serve are our veterans.

We have all reinvented the way we service and guide our veterans during the pandemic to include video conferencing, conference calls, and other virtual modalities. Challenge exists with our older veterans who may be unfamiliar with virtual technology and require assistance from another.

If another pandemic hits, the state needs a formal admission policy that should include a separate and exclusive entry for contagious or possibly contagious patients. We have witnessed scrambling due to lack of policy, then some policy, back to suspended admissions for visitors and patients. In addition, the lack of policy on transportation needs for at-risk veterans needs to be addressed to care for our community.

When death due to Covid-19 hit, all funeral homes and cemeteries had different guidelines on what they allowed. An obstacle was created to guide families through grief with honor. State policy and guidelines need to preside over funeral arrangements for veterans' families.

The veteran or widow who died in our NYS nursing homes due to Covid-19 should be entitled to a \$10,000 death supplemental policy.

Misc. additional needs including the lack of admission to the state nursing home during the pandemic, veteran transportation, budget cuts, etc.

Dan Griffin, Vice President of the NYS Veterans Nursing Home Board of Visitors

I have received many calls and emails from family members, they are angry that they have not been allowed to have a face to face visit with their loved ones in four months. They believe that the lonely life without visits is making the residents health worse. They were told that they could have face to face visits if the Home goes twenty-eight days without one positive test result. Each time when they get close to their goal, someone tests positive and they start the twenty-eight days all over again. Each time they get their hopes up and then disappointment again.

The Home has tried their best with Zoom and window visits, but with Zoom, they wear masks and using the computer speakers, they cannot hear each other. With the window visits, the visitors are outside wearing a mask, the resident is wearing a mask and talking on a cell phone, they cannot hear each other. The residents hearing is not good to begin with and some cannot speak or are bedridden.

So, why not have the visitors wear protective gear, like a doctor or surgeon does.

When I went to an appointment with my Doctor, he wore a mask, shield, gown and gloves; so that he could touch me during the physical. Why can't the family member wear the same; that way they could touch each other. It is the physical touch that makes us human, as in hugging. I believe the human touch is what helps to keep us sane.

NYS Veterans Nursing Home
Board of Visitors

Board of Visitors

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