



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Pamela Helming

'When Can I See My Mom?' Senator Helming Calls on State to Act on Nursing Home Visitation

PAMELA HELMING February 11, 2021



State Senator Pam Helming today called on the New York State Department of Health to answer the question she is getting from families with loved ones in nursing homes and long-term care facilities: When can I see my family? Senator Helming is urging the state to update its visitation guidance as more residents and staff are vaccinated.

Senator Helming said, "The families who are calling me overwhelmingly support a full investigation into the COVID-19 deaths of 15,000 of our nursing home and long-term care

residents. I will continue to seek the answers and accountability these families deserve. But the question my constituents are asking me is, 'When can I see my mom in the nursing home? When can I see my dad? When can I see my husband? When can I see my grandmother?' These families were given hope that they could finally see and hug their loved ones when residents were vaccinated. As vaccinations increase, the question we need the state to answer is, "When can residents see their families?"

According to [current data](#), about 86% of nursing home residents in the 54th District have received at least their first dose of the vaccine.

"I am asking the Department of Health to work with our nursing homes to find safe ways to bring families back together," said Senator Helming. "It was right to prioritize vaccinations for nursing home residents and staff. Now we need to prioritize the health and well-being of our seniors and begin to amend the guidance so that families can be reunited and facilities can start to safely resume resident activities."

"Families have been separated for nearly a year. I hear from families every day about how this extended isolation has impacted the health of their parents and grandparents," added Senator Helming. "I recently lost a close friend in a nursing home and the cause of death on her death certificate is 'failure to thrive.' Imagine losing the will to live. COVID has taken the lives of 15,000 of our elderly citizens. How many more are dying from isolation? How many seniors could we help thrive by reuniting them with family?"

Visitation and group activities for nursing home residents have been restricted since the pandemic began. Limited visitation by those with a negative COVID test has been allowed in some facilities. The DOH last updated its visitation guidelines in September.

Senator Helming is a sponsor of legislation that would allow nursing home residents to designate an essential person, such as a family member, who could be with them and provide care and attention.