

March 26, 2021

Good morning,

I am a Wichita resident who has four family members negatively affected by the lockdown in several facilities.

The first is my Grandmother, my dad's mom. She fell and broke her hip early on in the pandemic. She lived with my dad and he was her primary caregiver and DPOA. She was very hard of hearing and had mental decline and was not able to answer many of the questions of EMS, the Emergency Dept., Hospital staff, or rehab. My father was not allowed to be present with her at ANY point during her care. During her stay in the hospital, the admitting physician added a previous medication that her heart dr had weaned her off of...the result was increased chest pain as the med was no longer recommended by her heart dr...but because they would not let her caregiver be with her, nor did they communicate with him about treatment she had further complications after surgery. After she was moved to rehab her caregiver (son) and other local family members were only allowed to visit through a window. Because of her severe hearing loss she was not able to communicate through the window or over the phone. She was put on THREE antidepressants that caused eating suppression which caused severe weight loss in a woman who was barely pusing 100 pounds to start with. These meds also caused severe lethargy and the inability to stay awake, so rehab was non existent. She was confined to a wheelchair for the duration of her 4 week stay in rehab. She told several members of the family that she wished she would just die while in rehab. Her separation from her family caused this. The moment that her surgeon released her we took her out of rehab. No MARS were given at time of discharge (not for several weeks after did we receive a med list and what the new meds were for, even though they were requested) Once we started to wean her off of the anti depressants she was able to wake and stay awake throughout the day and receive home health physical therapy. After two weeks at home with family able to come in a visit daily she was up and walking again. We had two wonderful months with her before she passed away at home surrounded by family. She was 98 and passed away from heart failure.

The next two family members severely affected by the lock down are my other grandmother (my moms mom) and her husband. They were placed in a memory care facility shortly before my mom passed away in January of 2020 from cancer. Before the lockdown, my older sister spent many weeks staying at the facility with the grandparents as they didn't understand why they were there, and also grieving the loss of my mom. My sister is their DPOA and was in constant contact with the staff about their care. Both of the grandparents have different types of dementia and do not understand why they can no longer live on their own. Having my sister and myself able to visit them daily helped calm them and give them reassurance that they are not alone. After the lockdown, my sister was no longer allowed into the facility, the staff was not able to get them to take baths, nor were they able to do their laundry as the grandparents are very untrusting of strangers coming into their space. My sister had previously been taking their laundry and was able to get them to bathe. During the lockdown there were several times that medications were not ordered in a timely manner for them (my sister orders their medication, but the facility would not tell her that they were low until they had already finished their last doses. Several of the medications needed several days to refill), Grandpas Advair, which is a medication that is inhaled for his Congestive Heart failure, was being used by the med aide as a rescue inhaler for his COPD! WHAT! This resulted in triple dosing of a heart medication!

My sister was able to remove them from the facility and moved into a rental house with them. They need someone with them 24/7 as they are both fall risks and also have dementia. Because of the

lockdown, many very avoidable mistakes were made in their healthcare including missed DX of pneumonia and UTI's.

The last of the four family members is my sisters-in-law. She is a handicapped 50 year old with a history of seizures. She is high functioning but has the mental ability of a child of 6-8 years old depending on the task. She has been in a group home in Hutchinson for the last 30 years. Because of the lockdown she was no longer able to leave the house to do her work program, or her day programs. She is diabetic and obese. Because of the sudden loss of daily movement she gained an additional 30 pounds in 9 months. Her diabetes was not being managed by staff. Her brothers both had DPOA at the time (the brothers and their wives now have joint guardianship of her) which was grossly ignored by the staff, all the way up to the director. In September the family was told that they would not be lifting any restrictions, including not allowing her to leave her house, nor could the family visit unless they speak through a window which she just doesn't understand. During this time, even though it is in her care plan that she needs help with certain tasks, she developed a severe cradle cap(excess of oil and skin build up from poor hair washing) in her scalp because staff was not helping her with her hair. Her toenails were also wrapped around the front of her toes as they were not helping her trim her nails. Her teeth were also very stained and dirty as they were not helping her with brushing. She was also receiving verbal and mental abuse from the staff that the family was not aware of because we couldn't go see her and talk with her away from staff being present. In November of 2020 the family was informed that no restrictions would be lifted anytime soon. Her 50th birthday was the day before Thanksgiving, and with not being able to be with family for that celebration, thanksgiving, and christmas, my husband(her youngest brother) and myself offered for her to live with us and our children. We were told that she would not be able to return to the group home until the CDC declared that Covid was no longer a pandemic, so this move became permanent.

In the four months that she has lived with our family we have accomplished a consistent diabetic friendly diet and an easy daily exercise routine that have resulted in 13 pounds lost and kept off. Her diabetes is being managed well. We have successfully weaned her off the anti psych meds that she was placed on for outbursts that the family has never witnessed and were never informed of. Her anti psych meds had been tripled in a 6 month time frame. After switching her to our family dr we were guided in how to wean her off of that med...She has not had one single outburst or behavior to justify such a high dosage of med. She is much happier and laughs so much more than I have ever seen in the 16 years that I've known her. She is also opening up more about the mistreatments that she received for so many years at the group home.

Please support SB 303! Our elderly and mentally and physically handicapped family members MUST have the right to have an advocate represent them when they can not advocate for themselves. They MUST have the right to have family be around to encourage them,

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Rachel Elliott