

**Research Brief****August 2023**

## **-19 COLLAPSED THE CARE CONVOYS OF RESIDENTS LIVING WITH DEMENTIA**

### **IMPORTANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Nearly half of the 2 million US residents in long-term care (LTC) communities have dementia, and are especially vulnerable in emergencies. While early COVID-19 regulations were designed to minimize exposure, policymakers did not consider the impact that regulations, such as limited family visits, would have on residents' overall socioemotional, mental, and physical health outcomes. Residents with dementia often depend on complex care networks of family, formal staff, and comforting environments, all of which were strained in the pandemic. This research investigates the impact of COVID-19 regulations on care networks of residents with dementia.

### **STUDY METHODS**

Researchers interviewed 43 long-term care administrators in 2021 about the impact of COVID-19 regulations on residents with dementia, particularly their care networks. A few interview topics included participants' perspectives on COVID-19 regulations, how the pandemic had impacted residents with dementia, and what they had done to cope/facilitate communication with outside family. Researchers individually and collectively reviewed interview transcripts using ATLAS.ti software to identify patterns in the interviews. They also used the care convoy

## KEY FINDINGS

### **Residents did not understand limitations placed on family visits, which caused mental and physical decline.**

- Limited visits, short visits, and less personal visits (e.g., through a window) often confused residents
- Residents lacked reassuring physical touch (e.g., hand hold, hug)
- Families grieved because residents seemed to decline more rapidly between infrequent visits

### **Staff were pressured to overcompensate for lack of family care, and residents limited understanding of regulations.**

- Residents did not always understand safety measures, such as masking. Staff overcompensated with PPE to protect themselves and residents
- Staff were charged with comforting