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CT changes COVID-19 policy to allow hospital visitors for people with disabilities

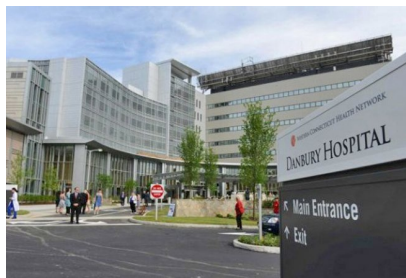
By Phil Hall - June 10, 2020

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The Connecticut Department of Public Health has modified its COVID-19 policy on prohibiting visitors to hospitals to allow exceptions for visits to patients with disabilities.

The policy shift followed a complaint to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office for Civil Rights by a coalition of nonprofits led by Disabilities Rights Connecticut.



The complaint accused the state of creating a guidance that ignored the special communications needs of people with disabilities, which would result in denying them equal access to medical

treatment.

The complaint also claimed the lack of visitation rights deprived some patients with disabilities of the "right to make informed

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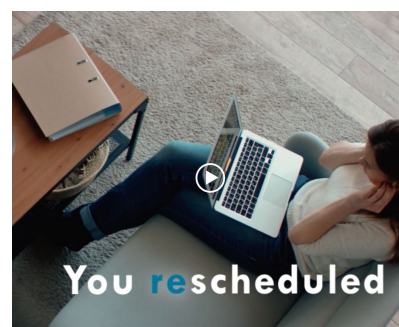
decisions and provide informed consent,” while others were subjected to an “unnecessary use of physical and chemical restraints” during their hospitalization.

In an interview with The New York Times, Roger Severino, director of the Office for Civil Rights, criticized the no-visitor guidance in relation to people with disabilities.

“People should not be left to fend for themselves when they can be reasonably accommodated,” he said. “The safety of patients with disabilities shouldn’t be pitted as if it’s a zero-sum game against the safety of others. Both can be protected.”

Deidre S. Gifford, acting commissioner of the Department of Public Health, announced the policy change will go into effect on June 15.

In making the change, she acknowledged that current restrictions “prevent family members, personal care assistants or similar disability service providers from accompanying a patient with disabilities through his or her stay at the facility, causing such patient with disabilities to experience barriers to obtaining the care they require as well as inconvenience and distress.”



TAGS CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH FEDERAL COMPLAINT

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Phil Hall

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Phil Hall's writing for Westfair Communications has earned multiple awards from the Connecticut Press Club and the Connecticut Society of Professional Journalists. He is a former United Nations-based reporter for Fairchild Broadcast News and the author of 10 books (including the 2020 release "Moby Dick: The Radio Play" and the

upcoming "Jesus Christ Movie Star," both published by BearManor Media). He is also the host of the SoundCloud podcast "The Online Movie Show," co-host of the WAPJ-FM talk show "Nutmeg Chatter" and a writer with credits in The New York Times, New York Daily News, Hartford Courant, Wired, The Hill's Congress Blog, Profit Confidential, The MReport and StockNews.com. Outside of journalism, he is also a horror movie actor - usually playing the creepy villain who gets badly killed at the end of each film.

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