

11/12/21

KEY POINTS

QSO-20-39 Nursing Home Visitation - COVID-19 (REVISED)

- **Note:** HHSC is evaluating the revised CMS guidance and working to update state rules/guidance. Providers will be notified as soon as possible.
- (Summary) Visitation is now allowed for all residents at all times.
- **Background:**
 - Therefore, if a visitor, resident, or their representative is aware of the risks associated with visitation, and the visit occurs in a manner that does not place other residents at risk (e.g., in the resident's room), the resident must be allowed to receive visitors as he/she chooses.
 - Visitors who have a positive viral test for COVID-19, symptoms of COVID-19, or currently meet the criteria for quarantine, should not enter the facility. Facilities should screen all who enter for these visitation exclusions.
- While taking a person-centered approach and adhering to the core principles of COVID-19 infection prevention, **outdoor visitation is preferred when the resident and/or visitor are not fully vaccinated against COVID-19.**
- **Indoor Visitation:**
 - Facilities **must** allow indoor visitation at all times and for all residents as permitted under the regulations. While previously acceptable during the PHE, facilities can no longer limit the frequency and length of visits for residents, the number of visitors, or **require** advance scheduling of visits.
 - visits should be conducted in a manner that adheres to the core principles of COVID-19 infection prevention and does not increase risk to other residents.
 - facilities should avoid large gatherings (e.g., parties, events) where large numbers of visitors are in the same space at the same time and physical distancing cannot be maintained.
 - **(Precautions)** If the nursing home's county COVID-19 community level of transmission is substantial to high, all residents and visitors, regardless of vaccination status, should wear face coverings or masks and physically distance, at all times. In areas of low to moderate transmission, the safest practice is for residents and visitors to wear face coverings or masks and physically distance, particularly if either of them is at increased risk for severe disease or are unvaccinated. If the resident and all their visitor(s) are fully vaccinated and the resident is not moderately or severely immunocompromised, they may choose not to wear face coverings or masks and to have physical contact. Visitors should wear face coverings or masks when around other residents or healthcare personnel, regardless of vaccination status. Additional information on levels of community transmission is available on the CDC's COVID-19 Integrated County View webpage.
 - While not recommended, residents who are on transmission-based precautions (TBP) or quarantine can still receive visitors
 - While it is safer for visitors not to enter the facility during an outbreak investigation, visitors must still be allowed in the facility.
- Facilities **may ask** about a visitors' vaccination status, however, visitors are **not required** to be tested or vaccinated (or show proof of such) as a condition of visitation. **If the visitor declines to disclose their vaccination status, the visitor should wear a face covering or mask at all times.**
- **Compassionate care visits** are allowed at all times. Previously during the PHE, there were some scenarios where residents should only have compassionate care visits.

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- (Ombudsman) If an ombudsman is planning to visit a resident who is in TBP or quarantine, or an unvaccinated resident in a nursing home in a county where the level of community transmission is 7 substantial or high in the past 7 days, the resident and ombudsman should be made aware of the potential risk of visiting, and the visit should take place in the resident's room.
- **Communal Activities, Dining and Resident Outings:**
 - The safest approach is for everyone, regardless of vaccination status, to wear a face covering or mask while in communal areas of the facility.
 - Facilities must permit residents to leave the facility as they choose.
 - Upon the resident's return, nursing homes should take the following actions (pg. 8)
 - **Residents who leave the facility for 24 hours or longer** should generally be managed as a new admission or readmission, as recommended by the CDC's "Interim Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations to Prevent SARS-CoV-2 Spread in Nursing Homes." Please note that there are exceptions to quarantine, including for fully vaccinated residents.
- **LTC facilities are not permitted to restrict access to surveyors based on vaccination status, nor ask a surveyor for proof of his or her vaccination status as a condition of entry.** If facilities have questions about the process a state is using to ensure surveyors can enter a facility safely, those questions should be addressed to the State Survey Agency. Surveyors should not enter a facility if they have a positive viral test for COVID-19, signs or symptoms of COVID-19, or currently meet the criteria for quarantine.