

# Coronavirus Visitation Resource

Recommendations from the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program

August 17, 2020



## About This Document

This document was developed by the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program in response to the Texas HHS release of “Phase 1 Visitation” rules and [requirements](#) regarding visitation by friends and family of residents. It is intended as a resource to [assisted living](#) and [nursing facilities](#), residents, residents’ family members and friends, and long-term care ombudsmen.

Recommendations regarding “compassionate care visits” as defined in HHS rules issued on Friday, Aug. 7, 2020, will be addressed in a different document.

[These Recommendations Apply to Phase 1 Visits to Facilities Where COVID-19 Is Not Present](#)

## General Recommendations for a Facility

The facility must support a resident’s right to visitation. To implement phase 1 visitation rules, the Ombudsman Program recommends a facility:

- Interviews each resident, or resident representative as appropriate, to determine who the resident would wish to visit with in person. Honor each resident’s right to have and choose visitors and to make preferences. These interviews also serve as a personalized communication with the resident to explain how visiting will work and what the resident can expect.
- Establishes a designated check-in area for visitors to be screened that accommodates social distancing of at least six feet and infection control standards.
- Provides graphics to help residents and visitors in maintaining social distancing and infection control standards.
- Provides hand hygiene stations at the screening check-in area to use before and after the visit by the resident and visitors.

- Creates accessible areas for screening and visiting with accommodations offered for those with mobility needs. Provide reasonable accommodations for any resident with a disability, such as hearing, vision, or cognitive impairments.
- Establishes a visiting area that allows social distancing of six feet between the resident and visitors. Provide multiple visit areas if social distancing can be practiced with each area at least six feet apart, privacy for each visiting group, and space to help any resident with movement or transport using their adaptive equipment.
- If the visiting area is outdoors, provides appropriate protection from the weather, for example, sun, heat, and rain.
- Marks the visiting area by tape, paint, or other means so residents, visitors, and staff know the boundaries of the area. Provide adequate seating.
- Assigns one or more facility staff daily to oversee the scheduling and implementation of visits. A facility may also train volunteers to help with scheduling and screening visitors when feasible. Facility staff are required by rule to monitor the visits.
- When scheduling a visit for a family member or friend of a resident, asks the visitor if they have the necessary personal protective equipment (PPE) and provides the person with PPE as needed.
- Develops a written explanation of the visiting guidelines in various languages, as needed. Specify the number of visitors allowed at one time to maintain compliance with social distancing. Specify infection control requirements such as hand washing, use of hand sanitizer, and wearing of PPE. Where possible, provide a copy of facility visiting guidelines prior to a visit. See recommended guidelines in the section marked [Visitor Responsibilities](#) below for details.
- Posts visit guidelines on the facility website, social media, at the visiting area of the building, and send by email. Inform families through email, text, phone calls, or other active means that visits are an option. Hand deliver copies of the guidelines to residents. Explain how to schedule a visit and what screening criteria will be used. Update the guidelines as needed.

## Facility Staff Responsibilities

- Sanitize the visiting area after each visit.

- Screen visitors for COVID-19 symptoms before allowing the visitor entrance to the visitation area. If a visitor fails to meet screening criteria, instruct the visitor to leave, inform them how to reschedule the visit, and take necessary infection control precautions, including disinfecting the area and changing PPE. If a visitor registers a temperature above 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit but has no other symptoms, a facility staff may consider allowing the person to rest in a shaded area and take their temperature a second time before determining whether they pass or fail screening criteria.
- At the screening area, provide a copy of the visitation guidelines in a language the visitor can understand and orally explain the process, including how long the visit will be, rules for infection control, and termination of the visit if these rules are not followed.
- Advise the visitor to use the facility-provided handwashing station or hand sanitizer before and after the visit.
- Provide a facemask if the visitor does not have personal supplies.
- Escort the resident to the visit area, if help is needed.
- Ensure the visitor and resident are wearing cloth face coverings or facemasks, unless the resident is unable to tolerate a face covering.
- Ensure physical distancing of at least six feet apart.
- Maintain visual observation to ensure infection control measures are followed but provide as much distance as necessary to allow for privacy of the visit conversation.
- Maintain a visit schedule not to exceed the facility's maximum established visitor limits, which is based on availability of space and the staff's ability to monitor for infection control.
- Advise the resident about hand hygiene and help if needed.

## Residents

- A facility staff member will remain within eyesight of you while you have a visitor but should be at a distance to allow for private conversations.
- A facility staff member will help you to the visiting area and back to your room, if needed.
- The facility will provide hand sanitizer or will ensure you wash your hands before and after a visit.

- You must continuously wear a cloth face covering or facemask unless you cannot tolerate one. If you cannot wear a face covering due to your health, the facility must allow you to visit without a face covering or facemask.
- Maintain a physical distance of at least six feet from your visitors.
- Physical contact, including hugs or hand holding is not allowed.
- If you currently have COVID-19, or are suspected of having it, the facility is prohibited from scheduling a visit with you unless it is an end-of life visit.

## Visitor Responsibilities

- Arrange with the facility for a specific day and time to visit. If new COVID-19 cases involving residents or staff are detected, visits must be rescheduled after the facility meets visitation requirements again.
- Wait in a vehicle, if applicable, prior to the visitation time. If using public or shared ride transport, the person/group should wait in an outdoor space that ensures social distancing of at least six feet from other visitors.
- Arrive at the designated visitation area at the specified time, but not before, to ensure that social distancing is maintained.
- Read the facility's visit requirements prior to the visit, which are recommended to include guidelines for:
  - Screening for COVID symptoms, including facility staff taking visitors' temperature and asking visitors questions about possible symptoms and travel, before allowing visitors to go to the visitation area.
  - Specifying the number of visitors allowed at one time. Unless prohibited by local, state, or federal orders, a facility may make an exception for special occasions, for example, the resident's birthday, that may require pre-arrangement with the facility scheduler.
  - Requiring visitors to remain in the designated visitation area for the arranged time.
  - Reminding adult visitors that they are responsible for ensuring that a child visitor complies with visit requirements. Child visitors must be able to stay within the designated visitation area, wear a face covering or facemask during the entire visit (except, in accordance with [CDC](#) guidance, children under the age of two), and comply with social distancing and infection control measures.

- Specifying any time limits and other conditions on visits.
- Providing a facility staff member to monitor the visit and help a resident who needs physical support.
- Requiring visitors to continuously wear a face covering or facemask and notifying visitors if the facility will provide facemasks or other PPE for visitors who do not have one.
- Providing hand sanitizer or hand washing stations for visitor use before and after the visit. Visitors are required to practice hand hygiene (wash hands or use hand sanitizer) as a condition of visitation.
- Requiring visitors to maintain a physical distance of at least six feet from residents.
- Allowing food and beverages, consistent with the resident's preferences, to be brought to the visit. Facility guidelines should provide that food may not be passed between residents and visitors during the visit. Guidelines should also state that visitors who want to bring food for a visit should inform the facility in advance and provide the food in a container for the facility staff to provide the resident.
- Prohibiting physical contact between residents and visitors.
- If the visitor develops symptoms of COVID-19 or is exposed to someone exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 within 14 days of a visit to the facility, immediately notify the facility so that it can take precautions to monitor others for symptoms. Do not arrange a visit if, within 14 days prior to a visit, you have COVID-19 or have been exposed to someone with COVID-19.

## Ombudsmen

- Make yourself available to residents, visitors, and facility staff to provide information and assistance about visitation practices.
- Be prepared to respond to complaints about visitation.
- Request facility visitation guidelines and provide feedback on them.
- Provide resources to facilities, including best practices and examples of visitation guidelines.