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Services

NEWS RELEASE

Texas Health and Human Services Commission

Cecile Erwin Young
HHS Executive Commissioner

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Contact: Christine Mann, 512-424-6951

Christine.Mann@hsc.state.tx.us

HHSC Expands Visitation at Long-Term Care Facilities *Allows Designated Essential Family Caregivers to Provide Support*

AUSTIN – Governor Greg Abbott today directed the Texas Health and Human Services Commission to expand visitation options for eligible nursing, assisted living, and intermediate care facilities, home and community-based service providers, and inpatient hospice, effective Thursday, Sept. 24. HHSC’s updated emergency rules will allow a designated essential caregiver to provide supportive, hands-on care to facility residents who do not have COVID-19.

“It is critical to the health of residents that we provide opportunities wherever possible for families to reunite, while continuing to take all necessary precautions to prevent the spread of disease,” said HHS Executive Commissioner Cecile Erwin Young. “Safely visiting with family and friends is the best medicine and most reassuring act we can provide for our most fragile Texans during these challenging times.”

Under the new rules, residents will be allowed to designate up to two essential family caregivers who will be provided necessary training to allow them to safely go inside a facility for a scheduled visit, including in the resident’s room, to help ensure their loved one’s physical, social and emotional needs are being met. Designated caregivers will not be required to maintain physical distancing, but only one caregiver can visit a resident at a time.

A long-term care facility resident (or legal representative) can designate the essential caregiver,

who can be a family member, friend or other individual. Facilities are required to train essential caregivers on the proper use of personal protective equipment and other infection control measures. Proper PPE must be used at all times during these scheduled visits, and the caregiver must test negative for COVID-19 within the previous 14 days before the initial visit.

HHSC is updating these rules after closely monitoring the COVID-19 outbreak, consulting with the Department of State Health Services, and receiving feedback from families, providers and other stakeholders.

For general visitors who are not a designated essential caregiver, these updated emergency rules will allow approved nursing facilities scheduled indoor visitation with the use of plexiglass safety barriers to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Physical contact between residents and general visitors is not permitted. Facilities also must continue to meet all additional visitation requirements outlined in the emergency rules.

Long-term care facilities, including nursing facilities and intermediate care facilities, that serve residents without COVID-19 but also have dedicated COVID-19 isolation units will be eligible for outdoor and indoor general visitation with plexiglass barriers. This visitation is only allowed for residents who are COVID-negative and must be held outdoors or in a COVID-free area of the facility. Facilities previously were required to be entirely COVID free to allow outdoor or indoor visitation.

The updated emergency rules will be posted on the HHSC COVID-19 provider web page.

For more information about how HHSC is helping Texans affected by COVID-19, [visit the HHSC website](#).