



COVID-19: Special Visitor Guidance for HUD-Assisted Communities

Because older adults are more susceptible to flu-like viruses like COVID-19, HUD-assisted housing providers can take precautionary measures to help keep residents and staff in senior housing communities safe by temporarily adjusting visitation policies at properties.

HUD has not issued applicable guidance on visitation in HUD-assisted privately-owned properties. Visitation policies are set by individual properties, taking into consideration any local or state requirements. For example, communities can ask visitors to disclose to property staff if they have traveled recently to areas heavily impacted by the novel virus or are experiencing symptoms of the illness, and can connect virtually with residents instead of in person.

It is important to note that although HUD does not approve or disapprove property-level visitation procedures, a community's visitor policies cannot be discriminatory under the Fair Housing Act.

Services and Visitation

When adjusting visitation policies, it is important to consider the services and access needs that older adults might have. Housing providers can confirm with their services networks and supply chains about their infectious disease protocol, and make sure older adults can still access food, transportation, and health and mental health services in the event that institutions and regular providers are temporarily closed or impacted by quarantine directives.

Limit and Screen Visitors

Any COVID-19 visitation policy changes are voluntary and up to the individual property. As of March 9, 2020, HUD has said they do not envision issuing guidance specifically related to visitation. Housing providers can refer to health authorities for the appropriate crisis response related to infectious disease and visitation; local health departments are the points of contact for issuing quarantine or health emergency directives, and the HUD Multifamily Field Office staff are the points of contact for technical assistance in HUD housing.

Affordable housing communities can consider whether to actively screen and prohibit visitation by those who meet the following criteria:

- Signs or symptoms of a respiratory infection, such as fever, cough, shortness of breath, or sore throat.
- In the last 14 days, has had contact with someone with a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19, or under investigation for COVID-19, or are ill with respiratory illness.
- International travel within the last 14 days to countries with sustained community transmission. For updated information on affected countries visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>
- Resides in a community where community-based spread of COVID-19 is occurring.

Providers can consider whether to allow individuals who meet any of these criteria into the community.

Additionally, communities may want to ask visitors: Have you taken any recent (within the last 14 days) trips on cruise ships or participated in other settings where crowds are confined to a common location? If the answer is yes, communities may suggest deferring the visit to a later date. If the visitor's entry is necessary, they could use protective equipment while onsite. If the community does not have protective equipment, the community could restrict the individual's visit, and ask them to come back after at least 14 days with no symptoms of COVID-19.

If the visitor is a service provider, the community should work with the service provider to identify an alternate staff member who can provide the service. The CDC recommends health care providers who have signs and symptoms of a respiratory infection should not report to work.

Communities should review and revise how they interact with health and wellness services staff, volunteers, vendors, EMS personnel and equipment, transportation providers, other practitioners (e.g., hospice workers, specialists, physical therapy, etc.), and take necessary actions to prevent any potential transmission.

If Visitation Is Allowed:

- Increase visible signage regarding infection prevention at entrances/exits.
- Provide instruction, before visitors enter the community and residents' apartments, on hand hygiene, and limiting surfaces touched.
- Increase accessibility to hand sanitizer.
- Instruct visitors to limit their movement within the community to the resident's apartment (e.g., reduce walking the halls, minimize going to common areas, etc.).
- Promote safe visitation by suggesting limited physical contact (practice social distances with no hand-shaking or hugging, and remaining six feet apart).
- Advise visitors to report to the community any signs or symptoms of COVID-19 or acute respiratory illness within 14 days after visiting.

Alternative Strategies In Lieu of In-Person Visitation

- Offer alternative virtual means of communication (phone, video-communication, etc.).
- Assign staff as primary contact to families for inbound calls.
- Offer a phone line with a voice recording updated at set times (e.g., daily) with the community's general operating status, such as when it is safe to resume visits.

Additional Recommended Actions:

Here are some additional steps you can take:

- Stay updated on COVID-19 activity in your area. Check with your state or local health department regularly.
- Stay updated on COVID-19 developments nationally. Check the CDC website regularly.