**Visitation During COVID-19**

**Leaders Guide**

**Visitation Leaders Guide**

**Leader’s Guide**

Long term care facilities are aware of the role families and other visitors have in providing support and social interaction for residents. Visitation had been restricted in facilities due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic in order to prevent visitors from introducing COVID-19 into the nursing home. High rates of COVID-19 within facilities and throughout communities had been driving factors in visitor restrictions. CMS has indicated, “While CMS guidance has focused on protecting nursing home residents from COVID-19, we recognize that physical separation from family and other loved ones has taken a physical and emotional toll on residents and their loved ones. Residents may feel socially isolated, leading to increased risk for depression, anxiety, and expressions of distress. Residents living with cognitive impairment or other disabilities may find visitor restrictions and other ongoing changes related to COVID-19 confusing or upsetting. CMS understands that nursing home residents derive value from the physical, emotional, and spiritual support they receive through visitation from family and friends.”1

Policies and procedures following the guidelines provided by Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and those state specific guidance for COVID-19 prevention and mitigation will need to be implemented.

CMS has revised guidance several times with the most recent clarification document entitled, “Nursing Home Visitation – COVID-19 (REVISED)”, QSO-20-39-NH on 09/23/2022.

With this guidance, the facility needs to provide systems and process to allow visitations for all residents at all times, with very limited and rare exceptions. Education and adherence to the core principles of COVID-19 infection prevention will be key components of the facility system

Leaders should develop a plan to communicate visitation to residents and their families/loved ones to include infection prevention and control core principles and the facility policy and procedures for visitation consistent with updated guidance. In addition, for all visitors and residents, communication on the risks of visitation should be explained for informed decision-making about visitation.

Staff are expected to follow infection prevention and control and COVID-19 prevention and management protocols. Staff education is to be provided regarding the updated facility visitation plan and the role staff will have in ensuring resident/family visits remain safe, as private as possible, and guidelines are followed.

Staff will provide pre-visit COVID-19 visitor screening and record keeping. Staff will provide visitor and resident education and coaching as needed during visits to ensure that the visitors understand the risks of visitation, the importance that the core principles of COVID-19 Infection Prevention are followed, directions on how visitation will occur in a manner that does not place any other residents at risk and observation for visitor adherence to the facility policies and procedures for visitation.

1. Oversight of the facility visitation program involves written policies, procedures or protocols are consistent with the regulations that includes the following:
   1. Implementation of the Core Principles of COVID-19 Infection Prevention
   2. A process for outdoor visitation
   3. A process for indoor visitation
   4. A process for indoor visitation during an outbreak
   5. Compassionate care visitation
   6. Visitor testing and vaccination
   7. Access to the Long-Term Care Ombudsman
   8. Federal Disability Rights Laws and Protection & Advocacy Programs
2. All Staff Education
3. Resident and Resident Representative Education
4. Ongoing monitoring and re-evaluation process

Additional information on levels of community transmission is available on the CDC’s COVID-19 Integrated County View webpage: <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view?list_select_state=all_states&list_select_county=all_counties&data-type=&null=>

Additional areas to be considered for visitation may include:

* Staff Resources and Education:
  + Licensed Nurses
  + CNA’s
  + Office Personnel
  + Social Services
  + Activities
  + Receptionist
  + Building Services
  + Interdisciplinary Staff
* Residents, Resident Representatives and other visitor education and preparation
* Education:
* Infection Control Practices and Prevention of Transmission
* Policies and Procedures for Infection Control, including COVID-19
* Facility’s county COVID-19 Community Transmission
* Specific visitation protocols
* Physical distancing during large gatherings or outbreak investigation
* Cleaning and disinfection protocols for visitation environment
* Proper application and removal of face masks and cloth facial coverings
* Hand hygiene and use of alcohol-based hand rub
* Documentation Considerations:
* County COVID-19 Community Transmission and COVID-19 risk
* Facility COVID-19 status
* Visitor COVID-19 testing results, if provided
* Visitor COVID-19 vaccination information if provided
* Resident Medical Record documentation of visit and resident response
* Monitoring and Evaluation
* County COVID-19 Community Transmission
* Observation of resident and visitor compliance with physical distancing in large groups and with outbreak investigations, source control and hand hygiene before, during, and following visit in accordance with policy and procedure
* QAPI review and reporting

**References and Resources**

* 1Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. QSO-20-39-NH, September 17, 2020, Revised 09/23/2022: Nursing Home Visitation – COVID-19 (Revised): <https://www.cms.gov/files/document/qso-20-39-nh-revised.pdf>
* Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Interim Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations for Healthcare Personnel During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Pandemic. Updated Sept. 28, 2022: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/infection-control-recommendations.html>
* Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Stay Up to Date with COVID-19 Vaccines Including Boosters. Updated Dec. 9, 2022: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/stay-up-to-date.html>
* Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. Long Term Care Critical Element Pathways, Infection Prevention, Control & Immunizations, CMS 20054, 10/2022: <https://www.cms.gov/files/zip/ce-pathways.zip>