
COVID-19 Guidance for Visitors in Nursing Facilities

Residents in nursing facilities have been isolated from activities and from visitors due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Isolation, loneliness and depression have taken a toll on residents' mental and physical health and wellbeing. Nursing facilities care for some of the most vulnerable people in our state. This guidance is intended to assist nursing facilities take steps toward re-socialization of residents living in these facilities. Recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have been considered in developing these recommendations.¹ Facilities should develop policies to outline the steps below to facilitate compliance.

Guidance for Visitation

Facilities

This guidance is limited to nursing facilities only; intermediate, skilled and dually-certified. This guidance does not apply to Intermediate Care Facilities for individuals with intellectual disabilities. Facilities must follow all infection control guidance from previous policies. Facilities must be free of COVID-19 infections with residents and staff to allow visitation from outside parties. Any facilities that have residents or staff with COVID-19 infections are excluded from this visitation policy until the Healthcare-Associated Infections and Antibiotic Resistance (HAI/AR) Program from the Utah Department of Health clears the facility. Access to adequate supplies of personal protective equipment (PPE) and testing for COVID-19 must also be available to consider visitation for residents. Facilities that do not have adequate PPE and those that have not been able to implement facility-wide PPE use for their staff should not attempt to open to visitors until those issues have been resolved.

Case Rates

Facilities located in **health jurisdictions** where the case rates are above **2,500** per 100,000 population should not allow visitors. Case rates may be obtained from the map on the Utah coronavirus website at <https://coronavirus.utah.gov/case-counts/>.

Screening Policies

All family members or other visitors for residents will be screened prior to visits. A Self-Screening Tool and Passport can be used as a guide for facilities to screen staff and outside visitors prior to visiting residents, and can be found at <https://coronavirus-download.utah.gov/Health-provider/COVID-19-HCW-Screening-Tool-Passport.pdf>.

- Screen visitors for symptoms of illness including:
 - cough, shortness of breath, and two or more the following:
 - fever, chills, sore throat, headache, muscle pain, or new loss of sense of taste or smell.

- Check body temperature; it must be must be less than 100°F to enter the facility.
- Screen visitors for exposure to family members or others that have been positive for the COVID-19 virus, or exposure to anyone that has been sick or has symptoms of COVID-19.
- Require visitors to sign a log to document name, date, time of visit and phone contact.

General Visitation Policies

- Limit visits to outside of the facility on facility grounds; do not allow visits inside of the facility.
- Schedule visits ahead of time.
- Determine frequency of visits by facility policy to avoid overwhelming facility staff and as supplies of PPE allow.
- Give visitors information during scheduling on what to expect at the visit.
- Require visitors to wash hands prior to and after visits.
- Clean and disinfect visiting area prior to each visit.
- Require visitors and residents to wear masks at all times during visits.
 - Masks may be provided by the facility or by the visitor.
 - Ensure that children who visit are old enough to wear a mask and keep it on during the entire visit.
 - Assess residents who are able to wear a mask and keep it on during visits.
- Use barriers to maintain 6 feet social distancing to prevent visitors from physical contact with residents.
 - Develop policies to ensure appropriate barriers and distancing are implemented.
- Failure to maintain social distancing should result in visitors being asked to leave.
- Ensure facility staff attend each visit to ensure proper distancing and compliance with visitation policies, including appropriate PPE.
- Limit visitors to two at a time per resident.
- Limit visits to 30 minutes per resident.
- Don't allow visits during meal times.
- Notify residents and residents' families of facility visitation policies.

Facilities should ensure these processes are implemented in accordance with infection control guidelines. If transmission to residents or staff occurs in the facility, discontinue these activities and return to full visitation restrictions.

Facilities should also adhere to any state, local or county phasing restrictions that may be more stringent than these guidelines.

Additional resources

¹CDC. Preparing for COVID-19 in nursing homes. Accessed on 8/16/2020.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/long-term-care.html#:~:text=Any%20visitors%20that%20are%20permitted,to%20frequently%20perform%20hand%20hygiene.> Last updated June 25, 2020.

Recommendations of the Long-Term Care Facility Subcommittee of the Utah Governor's COVID-19 Community Task Force