



# Outdoor Visitation Guidance for Long-term Care Facilities

INCLUDES NURSING HOMES, ASSISTED LIVING, AND OTHER CONGREGATE SETTINGS

State and federal regulatory authorities may also require some of these practices.

6/3/2021

To prevent outbreaks of COVID-19 in long-term care (LTC) facilities, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provided direction related to restricting visitation.<sup>1</sup> The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) recognizes how the effects of isolation can have serious impacts on the health and well-being of residents in LTC facilities. At this time, the risk of COVID-19 transmission in LTC facilities and the need for family, partner, or close friend interaction can be balanced under certain conditions. This document contains recommendations that we strongly encourage LTC facilities to follow and implement.

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## Facility criteria

- Adequate staff should be present to allow for help with outdoor transition of residents and to assist with cleaning and disinfecting any visitation areas.
- Staff should provide for resident and visitor privacy during their visit.
- Ask visitors to inform the facility if they develop fever or symptoms consistent with COVID-19 within 14 days of visiting the facility.
- Facilities should have a system to ensure visitors are screened for:
  - Signs and symptoms of COVID-19.
  - Close contact to someone with COVID-19 in prior 14 days.
  - Whether they are currently being evaluated for possible COVID-19.
  - Diagnosis of COVID-19 in prior 10 days.

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<sup>1</sup> CMS: QSO-20-39-NH Revised ([www.cms.gov/files/document/qso-20-39-nh-revised.pdf](https://www.cms.gov/files/document/qso-20-39-nh-revised.pdf))

- Facilities should have a system to ensure residents and visitors wear a well-fitting facemask that fully covers the mouth and nose when recommended by CDC guidance.<sup>2</sup>
- Facilities should encourage 6 feet social distancing for unvaccinated residents, in accordance with current CDC guidance.<sup>2</sup>
- Outdoor visitation spaces should be designed to be accessible without visitors walking through the facility.
- Facilities should provide alcohol-based hand rub to people visiting residents.
- Facilities should provide signage or verbal reminders of how to correctly use personal protective equipment and alcohol-based hand rub.
- Facilities should establish additional guidelines to ensure the safety of visitations and their facility operations. These guidelines should be reasonable and consider the individual needs of residents.

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## Resident criteria

- Residents are not eligible for outside visits if:
  - They are currently COVID-19 positive.
  - They have COVID-19 signs or symptoms.
  - They are in a 14-day quarantine or observation period.
- Residents who have had COVID-19 must no longer require transmission-based precautions as outlined by the CDC and MDH guidelines.
- Residents should wear a well-fitting facemask that fully covers their mouth and nose when recommended by CDC guidance.<sup>2</sup>
- If the resident is fully vaccinated, they may choose to have close contact (including touch) with their visitor in accordance with CDC's updated guidance.<sup>2</sup>

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## Visitor criteria

- Visitors should wear a well-fitting facemask that fully covers the mouth and nose, in accordance with CDC guidance.<sup>2</sup>
- Visitors, regardless of vaccination status, should maintain 6 feet distance from staff and residents other than the ones they are visiting.
- Visitors should use alcohol-based hand rub upon entering and exiting the visitation area.

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<sup>2</sup> CDC: [Updated Healthcare Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations in Response to COVID-19 Vaccination \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/infection-control-after-vaccination.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/infection-control-after-vaccination.html)

## OUTDOOR VISITATION GUIDANCE FOR LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES

- Visitors should be screened for signs and symptoms of COVID-19, and must attest to COVID-19 status, if known. This should be done at a designated location.
- Visitors should not walk through the facility to get to the outdoor visitation area.
- Visitors should sign in and provide contact information.
- Visitors under age 12 years should be in the control of adults who bring them and comply with social distancing requirements.
- Pets should be under the control of the visitor bringing them in.
- Visitors should stay in designated visitation locations.

**Weather:** Visits should occur only on days when there are no weather warnings that would put either the visitor or resident at risk.

Facilities that meet the criteria above retain the right to deny outdoor visitation to specific residents only if they believe:

- Circumstances pose a risk of transmitting COVID-19 to the facility because the resident or visitor does not comply with infection control guidance.
- The resident or visitor is at risk of abuse or harm.

**Residents and their loved ones may contact providers with questions about outdoor visits. Facilities should ensure residents, and their loved ones, have access to the Office of Ombudsman for Long-Term Care at 651-431-2555 or 1-800-657-3591 to request advocacy services.**



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