

# Outdoor Visitation Guidance for Long-term Care Facilities

INCLUDES NURSING HOMES, ASSISTED LIVING, AND OTHER CONGREGATE SETTINGS

To prevent outbreaks of COVID-19 in long-term care (LTC) facilities, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and the CDC provided direction related to restricting visitation. See [CMS QSO-20-14-NH \(https://www.cms.gov/files/document/3-13-2020-nursing-home-guidance-covid-19.pdf\)](https://www.cms.gov/files/document/3-13-2020-nursing-home-guidance-covid-19.pdf).

The Minnesota Department of Health recognizes how the effects of isolation can have serious impacts on the health and well-being of residents in LTC facilities. At this time, we believe 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

- Establish a schedule for visitation hours. Facilities should work with prospective visitors individually.
- Adequate staff must be present to allow for help with outdoor transition of residents, and to assist with wiping down any visitation areas as necessary.
- Staff should maintain visual observation but provide as much distance as necessary to allow for privacy of the visit conversation.
- Must have a system to ensure visitors are screened for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 at a screening location designated outside the building.
- Must have a system to ensure residents and visitors wear a mask or other face covering at all times, as tolerated.
- Outdoor visitation spaces must be designed to be accessible without visitors having to walk through the facility.
- Outdoor visitation spaces must support social distancing of at least 6 feet between the visitor and resident.
- Facilities must provide alcohol-based hand rub to persons visiting residents and provide signage or verbal reminders of correct use.

- Facilities must establish additional guidelines as needed to ensure the safety of visitations and their facility operations. These guidelines must be reasonable and must take into account the individual needs of residents.

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## Resident criteria

- Current COVID-19 positive residents, residents with COVID-19 signs or symptoms, and residents in a 14-day quarantine or observation period are not eligible for outside visits.
- Residents who have had COVID-19 must no longer require transmission-based precautions as outlined by the CDC and MDH guidelines.
- Residents must wear a mask, or other face covering, as tolerated.

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## Visitor criteria

- Visitors must wear a mask, or other face covering, during the entire visit unless medically contraindicated.
- Visitors must use alcohol-based hand rub upon entering and exiting the visitation area.
- Visitors must be actively 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 outside the building.
- Visitors should not walk through the facility to get to the outdoor visitation area.
- Visitors must sign in and provide contact information.
- Due to the risk of exposure, holding hands, hugging, kissing, or other physical contact is not allowed during family visits.
- Visitors under age 12 years must be in the control of adults who bring them and must also comply with social distancing requirements.
- Pets must be under the control of the visitor bringing them in.
- All visitors must maintain 6 feet social distance.
- Visitors must 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:

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