Long-term Care Visitation and Activities Recommendations Summary

Balancing COVID-19 safety and visitation restrictions with the well-being of residents in long-term care and other residential settings is an urgent priority for Minnesota. Social isolation, because of COVID-19 visitor restrictions, is a significant concern. The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) has developed Recommendations for Long-term Care Visitation and Activities: How and When to Safely Transition to the Next Level Throughout the COVID-19 Pandemic (https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hcp/ltcvisit.pdf). The document provides guidance to LTC facilities, such as nursing facilities and housing with services (HWS) with arranged home care providers (better known as assisted living-type facilities), during this time.

MDH recommends that LTC facilities use this guidance to make decisions about how and when facilities should ease limitations on visits and activities. This guidance identifies two levels of visitation and activities for nursing homes and assisted living-type facilities, based on risk. Level 1 is the most restrictive regarding visitation and activities. Level 2 allows more visitation and activities at facilities that have succeeded in preventing and controlling COVID-19 infections.

Visitation and activities Level 1

A facility must be in Level 1 if there has been a COVID-19 exposure at the facility in the past 28 days. This level requires extra limitations on visitors and activities during times of elevated risk of COVID-19 infection to keep residents and staff safe. Essential health care personnel, essential caregivers, and compassionate care visits are allowed, along with outdoor visitation and window visits.


Guidance for Window Visits at Long-Term Care Facilities (https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hcp/ltcwindows.pdf)
Visitation and activities Level 2

A facility may be in Level 2 if there has not been a COVID-19 exposure at the facility in the past 28 days. This level allows for controlled visits from family and friends, and resident trips outside the facility. Family, friends, and other visitors are allowed to visit after arranging the visit with the LTC facility. All visitors should follow facility guidelines and strict infection control measures, and wear a mask or face covering at all times.

When is an LTC facility allowed to transition to visitation and activities Level 2?

1. The facility must not have had exposures from COVID-19 cases in the past 28 days.
2. The facility must have completed appropriate testing (see below) and have a written testing plan.
3. The facility must consider other risk factors identified in the guidance, for example, case incidence by county. A comprehensive list of risk factors is in Appendix A of MDH Recommendations for Long-term Care (LTC) Visitation and Activities: How and When to Safely Transition to the Next Level Throughout the COVID-19 Pandemic.

What level of testing is required for visitation and activities Level 2?

At this time, due to the increased vulnerability of residents in nursing homes and the potential for larger, sustained outbreaks, all nursing homes that move to Level 2 must complete or have completed at least one round of facility-wide testing (testing for all staff and residents at a scheduled point in time) on or after May 1, 2020, but no later than two months after moving to MDH LTC visitation and activities Level 2.

MDH encourages assisted living-type facilities to complete facility-wide testing, or at least test those residents and staff who are at increased risk. At a minimum, the facility must continue to test residents and staff who are symptomatic.

It is important to note that the State of Minnesota will not have the capacity to test in all nursing homes and assisted living-type facilities statewide, especially not within a short period of time. It is important that facilities plan to make their own arrangements for testing. MDH will continue working to improve the overall testing infrastructure and to develop financing proposals that may help cover some of the associated costs.
If I am a family member or friend visiting at a visitation and activities Level 2 facility, what can I expect?

You should expect to do the following for the safety of residents:

- Schedule your visit, knowing the facility has to balance resident activities and the number of visitors at any given time.
- Expect to be screened. All facilities must have an active screening system for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 prior to the visitor walking through the facility.
- Wear a mask or other face covering at all times.
- Sign in and out and leave contact information.
- Use provided alcohol-based hand rub and follow all infection control guidance.
- Maintain 6 feet social distance when possible.
- Take a direct path to the resident’s room.
- A wave is the safest way to greet the resident. Due to the risk of exposure, holding hands and kissing is not allowed during visits. Prepare for a safe hug with faces turned.
- Prepare to supervise all visitors under age 12.
- Bring along a pet only if your facility allows it.

The visitor may take the resident outside for a walk, or during their time of visitation, but must maintain 6 feet of social distance after transporting the resident outside. Pushing a wheelchair is an acceptable activity while wearing proper mask or face covering.

What happens if a facility in visitation and activities Level 2 identifies a case of COVID-19?

If the facility identifies that a resident has COVID-19 or that a staff member has COVID-19 and worked while infectious, the facility must move back to visitation and activities Level 1.

This guidance combines current guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), and MDH.