

## CMS NEWS

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Contact: CMS Media Relations  
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### **CMS Updates Nursing Home Guidance with Revised Visitation Recommendations**

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), in collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), issued updated guidance today for nursing homes to safely expand visitation options during the COVID-19 pandemic public health emergency (PHE).

This latest guidance comes as more than three million doses of vaccines have been administered within nursing homes, thanks in part to the CDC's Pharmacy Partnership for Long-Term Care Program, following the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) authorization for emergency use of COVID-19 vaccines.

According to the updated guidance, facilities should allow responsible indoor visitation at all times and for all residents, regardless of vaccination status of the resident, or visitor, unless certain scenarios arise that would limit visitation for:

- Unvaccinated residents, if the COVID-19 county positivity rate is greater than 10 percent **and** less than 70 percent of residents in the facility are fully vaccinated;
- Residents with confirmed COVID-19 infection, whether vaccinated or unvaccinated, until they have met the criteria to discontinue transmission-based precautions; or
- Residents in quarantine, whether vaccinated or unvaccinated, until they have met criteria for release from quarantine.

The updated guidance also emphasizes that "compassionate care" visits should be allowed at all times, regardless of a resident's vaccination status, the county's COVID-19 positivity rate, or an outbreak. Compassionate care visits include visits for a resident whose health has sharply declined or is experiencing a significant change in circumstances.

CMS continues to recommend facilities, residents, and families adhere to the core principles of COVID-19 infection control, including maintaining physical distancing and conducting visits outdoors whenever possible. This continues to be the safest way to prevent the spread of COVID-19, particularly if either party has not been fully vaccinated.

"CMS recognizes the psychological, emotional and physical toll that prolonged isolation and separation from family have taken on nursing home residents, and their families," said Dr. Lee Fleisher, MD, CMS Chief Medical Officer and Director of CMS' Center for Clinical Standards and Quality. "That is why, now that millions of vaccines have been administered to nursing home residents and staff, and the number of COVID cases in nursing homes has dropped significantly, CMS is updating its visitation guidance to bring more families together safely. This is an important step that we are taking, as we continue to emphasize the importance of maintaining infection prevention practices, given the continued risk of transmission of COVID-19."

High vaccination rates among nursing home residents, and the diligence of committed nursing home staff to adhere to infection control protocols, which are enforced by CMS, have helped significantly reduce COVID-19 positivity rates and the risk of transmission in nursing homes.

Although outbreaks increase the risk of COVID-19 transmission, as long as there is evidence that the outbreak is contained to a single unit or separate area of the facility, visitation can still occur.

For additional details on the updated nursing home visitation guidance released today, visit here: <https://www.cms.gov/medicareprovider-enrollment-and-certificationsurveycertificationgeninfo/policy-and-memos-states-and/nursing-home-visitation-covid-19-revised>

A Fact Sheet can be found here: <https://www.cms.gov/newsroom/fact-sheets/cms-updates-nursing-home-guidance-revised-visitation-recommendations>

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