

**Purpose:**

This facility realizes the importance of visitation for improved social, physical, and overall well-being. COVID-19 has disrupted many residents in Long Term Care by preventing visitors from entering the healthcare facilities during the pandemic. We are expanding our visitation to the public in accordance with CMS and CDC recommendations. In doing so we will continue to emphasize the requirement for all visitors to adhere to core infection prevention practices for the safety of others.

**Policy:**

It is the facility policy to ensure safe visitation to our residents during the COVID- 19 pandemic.

In doing so we will continue to put emphasis on visitors adhering to core infection prevention practices for the safety of others including but not limited to properly wearing a mask, social distancing, and hand hygiene will not be permitted to visit and will be asked to leave.

**Definitions:**

**Up to Date:**

- An individual who has completed a primary series and received a booster is up to date.
- An individual who has completed a primary series and is not yet eligible for a booster is up to date

**Not Up to Date:** An individual who has completed a primary series and is eligible for a booster, but has not received a booster, is not up to date.

**Policy Interpretation and Implementation:**

The facility will provide the updated procedure to resident's and/or the appropriate representative.

At a minimum the facility will follow the “**Cores Principles of Infection Control**” as noted:

1. Visitors will be screened upon entry to the facility for signs and symptoms of COVID, fever, and exposure to someone with COVID in the last 10 days. Visitors who do not pass the screening (i.e., have symptoms, fever, exposure, or self-quarantining regardless of vaccination status) will not be permitted to enter the facility or outdoor visits.
2. Visitors who have a positive viral test for COVID-19, symptoms of COVID-19, or currently meet the criteria for quarantine, should not enter the facility.
3. Visitors, staff, and residents will be educated to perform hand hygiene at a minimum, before, and after visits (use of alcohol-based hand rub is preferred).

4. Face coverings that are well-fitted covering the nose and mouth and physical distance of at least six feet between people is required in common areas and may be required in resident rooms.
5. Instructional signage will be present throughout the facility and proper visitation education on signs and symptoms of COVID-19, prevention of transmission, and other postings as applicable.
6. Cleaning and disinfecting of high-frequency touch surfaces in the facility often.

### **Outdoor Visitation:**

The facility will encourage outdoor visitation if the resident or visitor is unvaccinated. The facility will provide an area that is protected from weather elements and protection from the heat and sun.

### **Indoor Visitation:**

Although there is no limit on the number of visitors that a resident can have at one time, visits will be conducted in a manner that adheres to the core principles of COVID-19 infection prevention (see above) and does not increase risk to other residents. The following guidelines will be implemented:

1. The facility will ensure that physical distancing is maintained by visitors during peak times of visitation (e.g., lunch time, after business hours, etc.).
2. Visitors will be instructed to go directly to the resident's room or designated visitation area. Visitors will be required to wear a well fitted face covering or mask when walking in the hall or any public area of the building to get to designated area regardless of vaccination status.
3. Visitors will be required to wear face coverings or masks when around other residents or healthcare personnel, regardless of vaccination status and maintain physical distancing.
4. If a resident's roommate is not up to date or immunocompromised (regardless of vaccination status), if possible, visits will not be conducted in the resident's room.
5. For situations where there is a roommate and the health status of the resident prevents leaving the room, the facility will attempt to enable in-room visitation while adhering to the core principles of infection prevention. (Curtain pulled or barrier, social distance from roommate, and appropriate PPE). In this case, visitors may be limited to ensure social distancing can occur.
6. The resident may have physical contact with the visitor regardless of the vaccination status
7. If the resident and all their visitor(s) are up to date and the resident is not moderately or severely immunocompromised, they may choose not to wear face coverings or masks

8. The facility will not schedule or approve large gatherings (e.g., parties, events) when large numbers of visitors are in the same space at the same time and physical distancing cannot be maintained.
9. In considering privacy the facility will not be monitoring each visit one on one, however visitors who are observed not in compliance with the core principles of infection control such as wearing their mask, will be educated and if continues will be asked to leave the facility.
10. The facility realizes with the opening of visitation the need for compassionate care visits will be rare, but in the event of limited visitation, the facility will always allow compassion visits for residents.

### **County Community Level of Transmission Considerations**

If the County COVID-19 community level of transmission is substantial to high, visitors will be required to wear a face covering or mask and physically distance, at all times, regardless of vaccination status.

If the County COVID-19 community level of transmission is low to moderate transmission, we request in an abundance of caution for residents and visitors to wear face coverings or masks and physically distance, particularly if either of them is at increased risk for severe disease or are unvaccinated.

### **Visitation for residents in Transmission Based Precautions (TBP), Quarantine, or during Outbreak Investigation**

When a new case of COVID-19 among residents or staff is, the facility identified will complete outbreak testing for staff and residents regardless of vaccination status as soon as possible. (see testing policy).

The facility does not recommend visitation for residents who are on transmission-based precautions (TBP), quarantine, during outbreak testing, however residents can still receive visitors if they choose.

- Before visiting residents' who are on TBP, quarantine, or during outbreak investigation visitors will be made aware of the potential risk of visiting and precautions necessary to visit the resident.
- Visitors are required to wear all necessary PPE to protect themselves from COVID during the visit regardless of vaccination status.

### **Visitor Testing and Vaccination**

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The facility understands the importance of visitation to a residents' physical, mental, and psychosocial well-being, and how visitation will support their quality of life. In opening visitation, we also consider the safety of our residents, community, and team. In doing so, we will:

1. It Is not required but the facility may choose to offer testing for visitors if the county community positivity rate is substantial too high or as requested. This will require the visitor who accept the COVID-19 antigen test to wait 15 min prior to entering care areas for test results.
2. The facility does encourage visitors to be tested within 2- 3 to days prior to visitation. However, testing is not a requirement for visitation.
3. Visitors are not required to show proof of vaccination status, however if the visitor declines to disclose vaccination status, the visitor will be asked to wear a face covering or mask. This also applies to representatives of the Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman and protection and advocacy systems.
4. The facility encourages visitors to become vaccinated when they have the opportunity. Visitor testing and vaccination can help prevent the spread of COVID-19 in our communities.

## Additional guidance for access to visitation

In addition to health care workers, personnel educating and assisting in resident transitions to the community should be permitted entry consistent with this guidance.

1. Ombudsman Visitation - nursing home provide representatives of the Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman with immediate access to any resident. If an ombudsman is planning to visit a resident who is in TBP or quarantine, or an unvaccinated resident in a nursing home in a county where the level of community transmission is substantial or high in the past 7 days, the resident and ombudsman should be made aware of the potential risk of visiting, and the visit should take place in the resident's room. If an alternative means of communicating is requested by the resident or agency, the facility will assist in accommodating the request.
2. Any representative of the protection and advocacy (P&A) systems: 42 CFR §483.10(f)(4) (i)(E) and (F) requires the facility to allow immediate access to a resident by any representative of the protection and advocacy systems, as designated by the state, and as established under the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000 (DD Act), and of the agency responsible for the protection and advocacy system for individuals with a mental disorder (established under the Protection and Advocacy for Mentally Ill Individuals Act of 2000). If the P&A is planning to visit a resident who is in TBP or quarantine, or an unvaccinated resident in a county where the level of community

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transmission is substantial or high in the past 7 days, the resident and P&A representative should be made aware of the potential risk of visiting and the visit should take place in the resident's room.

3. Qualified interpreters or someone to facilitate communication are allowed entry if a resident requires assistance to ensure effective communication and the assistance is not available from onsite staff or effective communication cannot be provided remotely (e.g., video remote interpreting).
4. Federal and State Surveyors are not required to be vaccinated and must be permitted entry into facilities unless they exhibit signs or symptoms of COVID-19.
5. Surveyors should also adhere to core principles of COVID-19 infection prevention and adhere to any COVID-19 infection prevention requirements set by state law. LTC facilities are not permitted to restrict access to surveyors based on vaccination status, nor ask a surveyor for proof of his or her vaccination status as a condition of entry.

## **References:**

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, February 2nd, 2022). Updated Healthcare Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations in Response to COVID-19 Vaccination.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/infection-control-after-vaccination.html>

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS, November 12, 2021). Nursing Home Visitation - COVID-19, Revised (QSO-20-39-NH).

<https://www.cms.gov/files/document/qso-20-39-nh-revised.pdf>