

Policy: Updated Interim Visitation Policy

3/10/2021

References :

- [QSO-20-14-NH \(March 2020\)](#)
- [QSO- 20- 39-NH](#) September 17, 2020, Updated 3/10/2021

This facility will allow visitation of all visitors and non-essential health care personnel and in accordance with current CMS directives and CDC recommendations, or as directed by state government (whichever is more stringent).

Visitation will occur through different means based on facility structure and residents' needs, such as resident rooms, dedicated visitation spaces, outdoors, and for circumstances beyond compassionate care situations. The visitation will be person-centered, consider the resident's physical, mental, and psychosocial well-being, and support their quality of life. Outdoor visitation is preferred *even when the resident and visitor are fully vaccinated* against COVID-19.*

Policy Explanation and Compliance Guidelines:

1. The Infection Preventionist/designee will monitor the status of the COVID-19 situation through the CDC website and local/state health department, and will keep facility leadership informed of current directives/ recommendations and the need for restricting visitation if indicated.
2. The facility will communicate this visitation policy through multiple channels. Examples include signage, calls, letters, social media posts, emails, and recorded messages for receiving calls.
3. Non-essential staff, as designated in emergency preparedness plans, will be notified through routine and emergency communication procedures for staff.

Screening/Entry

- Screening of visitors will include questions and observation. When screening visitors who enter the facility, facility will ask both screening questions and observe whether the visitor is exhibiting signs or symptoms of COVID-19.
- Visitors exposed to COVID in prior 14 days may not enter facility even if vaccinated. **CMS clarifies that the facility must deny entry to those who have had close contact with someone with COVID-19 in the past 14 days, even if they have been fully vaccinated.** (CMS has adopted CDC's definition of "**fully vaccinated**" to mean when two or more weeks have passed since the individual received the second dose of a two-dose vaccine (Pfizer and Moderna) or since they received one dose of a single-dose vaccine (Johnson & Johnson).
- Visitor testing or vaccination may not be required for entry. CMS instructs that visitors should not be required to be tested or vaccinated, or show proof, as a condition of visitation. Similarly, representatives of the Ombudsman's office and state and federal surveyors are not required to be vaccinated and must be allowed entry into the facility, unless they exhibit signs or symptoms of COVID-19.

Outdoor Visitation

- Outdoor visitation is preferred, even when resident and visitor are fully vaccinated. CMS continues to advise that visits should be held outdoors "whenever" practicable, even where the resident and visitor are fully vaccinated.

Indoor Visitation

- Indoor visitation allowed at all times for all residents except under limited circumstances. CMS clarified that indoor visitation should be allowed at all times for all residents, regardless of vaccination status, except under the following circumstances (note compassionate care visits should still be permitted under circumstances below):

- 1) Resident is unvaccinated and the county positivity rate is greater than 10% and less than 70% of the facility residents are fully vaccinated.
- 2) Resident is COVID-positive, whether vaccinated or unvaccinated, until they have met [CDC's criteria to discontinue Transmission-Based Precautions](#).
- 3) Resident is quarantined, whether vaccinated or unvaccinated, until they have met criteria for release from [quarantine](#) (have not tested positive and without symptoms for 14 days after their admission or exposure).
- 4) Resident on a unit with an outbreak (see discussion in next bullet).

- Indoor visitation may continue during an outbreak that is contained to a single area (e.g. unit) of the facility. CMS has updated the guidance to allow for visitation to occur during an outbreak under certain circumstances. As before, when an outbreak is detected among residents or staff, all visitations must be suspended, except for compassionate care visits, until at least one round of facility-wide testing is completed. However, under the revised guidance, visitation can resume as follows:

- If the first round of outbreak testing reveals no additional COVID-19 cases in other areas/units of the facility, visitation can resume for residents in the areas/units with no COVID-19 cases. Visitation must remain suspended on the unit/area of the facility that had the positive COVID-19 cases, until the facility meets the criteria to discontinue outbreak testing. However, if the first round of outbreak testing reveals additional COVID-19 cases in other areas/units of the facility (e.g. new cases in two or more units), facilities should suspend visitation for all residents, vaccinated and unvaccinated, in all units, until the facility meets the criteria to discontinue outbreak testing. (*Note: the requirements for outbreak testing remain the same*). Facilities must continue all necessary rounds of outbreak testing until no new cases of COVID-19 infection are detected among staff or residents for 14 days since the most recent positive COVID-19 test result. If subsequent rounds of testing identify one or more additional COVID cases in other areas of the facility, then the facility must suspend visitation for all residents (vaccinated and not vaccinated) until the facility meets the criteria to discontinue outbreak testing.

Close Contact During Visitation

- Vaccinated resident may choose close contact, including touch, with their visitor. CMS has added guidance that a resident who is fully vaccinated may choose to have close contact with their visitor, including touch, while wearing a well-fitted face mask and performing hand-hygiene before and after. Visitors should maintain physician distance from other residents and staff in the facility.

This applies both to indoor and outdoor visitation. Note that, as before, compassionate care visitors should be permitted personal contact following appropriate infection prevention guidelines and for limited amounts of time where possible and regardless of vaccination status.

Notification to Visitors of Potential Exposure

- Visitors must be notified of potential exposure. CMS is now requiring that facilities notify visitors of potential COVID-19 exposure in the building, for example through signage regarding current outbreak, and the requirement to adhere to principles of COVID-19 infection prevention, including hand hygiene and use of face coverings.

Compassionate Care Visits

- Compassionate care visits must be allowed at all times. CMS reiterated that compassionate care visits, and visits required under federal disability rights law, should be allowed at all times, regardless of a resident's vaccination status, the county's COVID-19 positivity rate, or an outbreak.

