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COVID-19, Visitation and Long-Term Care and Assisted Living Communities

Information provided by: Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS).

People who live in our nursing homes, assisted living communities and the staff and caregivers are at a high risk of contracting COVID-19. Their safety and wellbeing continues to be a top priority for DHS. When a resident or staff member tests positive for COVID-19, the potential for rapid spread can be extremely high and life-threatening, and asymptomatic individuals who are COVID-positive can spread the virus. In order to minimize spread, we ask that long-term care settings remain vigilant about minimizing the numbers of people entering their buildings from the community. The Department of Health Services continues to support the following guidance regarding visitation of residents by family members. This information is consistent with guidance published by the federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and published on the [DHS COVID-19 webpage](#).

Restrictions on visitors:

- Facilities should restrict all visitors and nonessential health care personnel, except for certain compassionate care situations, such as an end-of-life scenario. Facilities should notify potential visitors of the need to defer visitation until further notice (through signage, calls, letters, etc.).
- In compassionate care situations, visitors will be limited to a specific room only. Facilities should require visitors to perform hand hygiene and use personal protective equipment (PPE), such as face masks. Decisions about visitation during an end-of-life situation should be made on a case-by-case basis, which should include careful screening of the visitor (including clergy, bereavement counselors, etc.) for fever or respiratory symptoms.
- Individuals with symptoms of a respiratory infection (fever, cough, shortness of breath, or sore throat) should not be permitted to enter the facility at any time (even in end-of-life situations).
- Visitors that are permitted to enter must wear a face mask while in the building and restrict their visit to the resident's room or other location designated by the facility. Facilities should also remind visitors to frequently perform hand hygiene, especially after coughing or sneezing.

Health care workers. Facilities should follow CDC guidelines for restricting access to health care workers.

- Other health care workers, such as hospice workers, EMS personnel, or dialysis technicians, who provide care to residents should be permitted to enter the facility as long as they meet the CDC guidelines for health care workers.
- Facilities should contact their local health department for questions, and frequently review the CDC COVID-19, website for health care professionals.

Residents still have the right to access the Ombudsman Program with the Board on Aging and Long Term Care by phone at 1-800-815-0015, via e-mail at BOALTC@wisconsin.gov or online at <http://longtermcare.wi.gov/>.

These recommendations are to keep our residents of Wisconsin nursing homes and assisted living communities protected from the COVID-19 virus, but also the staff and caregivers who work in those settings. Thank you for your help in protecting Wisconsin's most vulnerable citizens.