

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in Nursing Homes with Hospice Patients

Guidance for Infection Control and Prevention

Issued by CMS March 13, 2020 - NHPCO REVISED March 14, 2020

On March 13, CMS issued REVISED guidance for infection and control and prevention of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) for [nursing homes](#). This quick guide will address guidance on visitation, REVISED by CMS on 3/13/2020, which has specific guidance for visitation for certain compassionate care situations, such as end-of-life, and details for hospice workers in nursing homes. [Hospice guidance from CMS](#) has not changed this week.

Updated visitation guidance for nursing facilities, with exception for end-of-life situations:

*For ALL facilities nationwide: Facilities should restrict visitation of all visitors and non-essential health care personnel, **except for certain compassionate care situations, such as an end-of-life situation**. In those cases, visitors will be limited to a specific room only. Facilities are expected to notify potential visitors to defer visitation until further notice (through signage, calls, letters, etc.). **Note: If a state implements actions that exceed CMS requirements, such as a ban on all visitation through a governor's executive order, a facility would not be out of compliance with CMS' requirements. In this case, surveyors would still enter the facility, but not cite for noncompliance with visitation requirements.***

Additional detail for compassionate situation entry:

For individuals that enter in compassionate situations (e.g., end-of-life care), facilities should require visitors to perform hand hygiene and use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), such as facemasks. 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. Those 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). Those visitors that are permitted, must wear a facemask while in the building and restrict their visit to the resident's room or other location designated by the facility. They should also be reminded to frequently perform hand hygiene.

Hospice workers ARE considered health care workers and SHOULD BE PERMITTED to enter the facility.

Additional guidance on exceptions for health care workers: Facilities should follow CDC guidelines for restricting access to health care workers found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/hcp/guidancerisk-assesment-hcp.html>. This also applies to other health care workers, such as hospice workers, EMS personnel, or dialysis technicians, that provide care to residents. **They should be permitted to come into 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 website dedicated to COVID-19 for health care professionals (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/hcp/index.html>)