

Visitation Policy for Florida Assisted Living Facilities

Background

On March 22, 2021, at the direction of Governor Ron DeSantis, Florida Division of Emergency Management Director Jared Moskowitz issued Emergency Order 21-001 rescinding state visitation restrictions for long-term care facilities. On April 6, 2022, Governor DeSantis signed SB 988, which guarantees Florida families the fundamental right to visit their loved ones receiving care in assisted living and other health care facilities.

Policy Statement

It is the policy of the facility to allow and promote visitation in accordance with the most current local, state, and federal requirements provided that such individuals/visitors (1) comply with the most recent Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) core concepts of infection prevention and control and the facility's most recent infection control procedures, and (2) are screened for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 prior to entry if required by the facility in response to an outbreak. The assisted living facility will allow for in-person visitation in all of the following circumstances, unless the resident objects.

- End of life situations
- A resident who was living with family before being admitted to the facility's care is struggling with the change in environment and lack of in-person family support.
- The resident is experiencing emotional distress or grieving the loss of a friend or family member who recently died.
- A resident needs cueing or encouragement to eat or drink which was previously provided by a family member or caregiver.
- A resident who used to talk and interact with others is seldom speaking.

Policy Interpretation and Implementation

Visitation Requirements

1. All visitors must be screened in accordance with the facility's standardized screening procedure.
2. Visitation spaces must be equipped with hand hygiene stations and must be cleaned and disinfected between visitors.
3. The director of nursing or another person designated by the administrator shall support and provide infection prevention and control education to visitors on topics such as use of masks, proper hand hygiene, social distancing, vaccinations, and visitation policies.

4. If a visitor is experiencing symptoms of a respiratory illness or a fever, the facility strongly encourages visitors to be tested no greater than 72 hours prior to the visit. However, COVID-19 testing is not required as a condition of visitation. For visitors who would like to be tested as a measure of precaution, the facility will offer point-of-care (POC) testing to visitors at no charge on the day of the visit (if supplies permit).
5. Residents and visitors are NOT required to be vaccinated as a condition of visitation. However, the facility encourages vaccines and will share vaccination information as appropriate to enable independent choice.
6. Children may visit the facility. However, young children must be accompanied by an adult to ensure adherence with infection control protections and facility policies.
7. The facility will monitor visitors for adherence to proper use of face masks, other PPE, hand hygiene and social distancing when required to prevent and control the outbreak of infection.
8. Residents are permitted to leave the facility with no restrictions on the length of absence. Residents will be encouraged to adhere to core infection prevention/control measures such as wearing a well-fitting face mask, hand hygiene, and social distancing during periods of high community rates of COVID-19 transmission while away from the community. Upon return, the resident will be screened for COVID-19 and COVID-19 exposure risks. Appropriate infection prevention measures, in compliance with local, state, and federal requirements, will be taken by the facility in the event of an exposure or if the resident is demonstrating symptoms of COVID-19 upon return.
9. Physical contact, such as a hug, is permitted during visitation if desired by the resident. However, the visitor and resident must adhere to core infection control precautions if required by the facility.
10. Visitation is permitted in common areas as long as residents can have private communication with their visitors, and infection control precautions are followed.
11. There is no restriction on the number or length of visits. However, the administrator reserves the right to reasonably limit the number of visitors per resident at one time as well as the total number of visitors in the facility at one time if necessary to maintain infection control precautions.
12. Every resident has the right to visit with any person of his/her choice (who meets the screening criteria). Reasonable visitation hours may be established, including evenings and weekends consistent with licensing requirements. Upon request, the facility shall make provisions to extend visiting hours for caregivers and out-of-town guests, and in other similar situations.
13. Visitors may enter the facility to host sponsored services such as church services or entertainment events in compliance with the most recent CDC Guidance for screening, personal protective equipment, social distancing and hand hygiene.

Visitation Policy in Response to Outbreak Testing

A single new case of SARS-CoV-2 infection in any HCP or in a resident should be considered an outbreak. When one case is detected there are often other residents and HCP who are infected with SARS-CoV-2 who can continue to spread the infection, even if they are asymptomatic. Performing viral testing of all residents as soon as there is a new confirmed case in the facility will identify infected asymptomatic residents quickly, in order to assist in their clinical management and allow rapid implementation of IPC interventions (e.g., isolation, use of personal protective equipment) to prevent SARS-CoV-2 transmission.

For outbreak testing the following is required:

1. Immediately perform POC testing on all residents (vaccinated or unvaccinated) who have not previously had active COVID-19 (within the 90 day window). After initially performing viral testing of all residents and HCP in response to an outbreak, continue repeat viral testing of all previously negative residents/associates, generally every 3 days to 7 days, until the testing identifies no new cases of SARS-CoV-2 infection among residents or associates for a period of at least 14 days since the most recent positive result. For individuals who test positive, repeat testing is not required.
2. Testing for asymptomatic residents/staff who have previously tested positive and recovered do not need to be retested within 3 months after symptom onset.

Indoor Visitation during an Outbreak - CMS Memorandum QSO-20-38-NH

An outbreak exists when a new nursing home onset of COVID-19 occurs (i.e., a new COVID-19 case among residents or staff). This guidance is intended to describe how visitation can still occur when there is an outbreak, but there is evidence that the transmission of COVID-19 is contained to a single area (e.g., unit) of the facility. To swiftly detect cases, we remind facilities to adhere to CMS regulations and guidance for COVID-19 testing, including routine staff testing, testing of individuals with symptoms, and outbreak testing.

When a new case of COVID-19 among residents or staff is identified, a facility should immediately begin outbreak testing and discourage all visitation (except that required under Florida and federal disability rights law), until at least one round of facility-wide testing is completed.

Visitation can resume based on the following guidance:

-If the first round of outbreak testing reveals no additional COVID-19 cases in other areas (e.g., units) of the facility, then visitation can resume for residents in areas/units with no COVID-19 cases. However, the facility should suspend visitation on the affected unit until the facility meets the criteria to discontinue outbreak testing. For example, if the first round of outbreak testing reveals two more COVID-19 cases in the same unit as the original case, but not in other units, visitation can resume for residents in areas/units with no COVID-19 cases.

-If the first round of outbreak testing reveals one or more additional COVID-19 cases in other areas/units of the facility (e.g., new cases in two or more units), then facilities should suspend

visitation for all residents (vaccinated and unvaccinated), until the facility meets the criteria to discontinue outbreak testing.

While the above scenarios describe how visitation can continue after one round of outbreak testing, facilities should continue all necessary rounds of outbreak testing. In other words, this guidance provides information on how visitation can occur during an outbreak, but does not change any expectations for testing and adherence to infection prevention and control practices. If subsequent rounds of outbreak testing identify one or more additional COVID-19 cases in other areas/units of the facility, then facilities should discourage visitation for all residents (vaccinated and unvaccinated), until the facility meets the criteria to discontinue outbreak testing.

NOTE: In all cases, visitors should be notified about the potential for COVID-19 exposure in the facility (e.g., appropriate signage regarding current outbreaks), and adhere to the core principles of COVID-19 infection prevention, including effective hand hygiene and use of face-coverings.

Outbreak testing is discontinued when testing identifies no new cases of COVID-19 infection among staff or residents for at least 14 days since the most recent positive result. For more information see CMS Memorandum QSO-20-38-NH.

We note that visitation required under Florida SB-988 as described in the policy above and federal disability rights law should be allowed at all times, for any resident (vaccinated or unvaccinated) regardless of the above scenarios. Lastly, facilities should continue to consult with their state or local health departments when an outbreak is identified to ensure adherence to infection control precautions, and for recommendations to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

Visitor Requirements for Visitation During Outbreaks

1. Properly wear a well-fitting face mask, perform proper hand hygiene and observe social distancing while visiting in the facility.
2. Visitors must do the following to ensure resident and facility safety:
 - a. Pass screening for COVID-19 before entering the facility.
 - b. Wear a well-fitting face mask, observe social distancing and practice good hand hygiene while visiting in the facility.
 - c. Inform the facility if they develop a fever or symptoms consistent with COVID-19 within 14 days of a visit.
 - d. Limit movement in the facility to the resident's room or visitation area. Visitors must not visit in other residents' rooms or associate work areas.

Beauty Salons and Barber Services

1. Barbers and hairdressers providing services must wear a well-fitting face mask and gloves and perform hand hygiene.
2. Residents receiving services must wear a face mask, if tolerated.
3. More than one resident may receive services at a time, and waiting customers must adhere to social distancing guidelines.
4. Services may not be provided if the resident is quarantined, if the resident is positive for COVID-19, or if the resident is symptomatic and suspected of having COVID-19.
5. Barbers and hairdressers must properly clean and disinfect equipment between residents.

References

Florida Department of Health COVID-19 Website <https://floridahealthcovid19.gov>

Agency for Health Care Administration Website <https://ahca.myflorida.com/> Emergency Order 21-001

Florida SB 988 <https://ahca.myflorida.com>

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services: CMS Memorandum QSO-20-38-NH.

Centers for Disease Control Website <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/long-term-care.html>

Effective Date: May 1, 2022.