

**Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19):  
Indoor Visitation Requirements for Skilled Nursing Facilities and Assisted Living  
Residences**

This document provides requirements for indoor visitation in skilled nursing facilities and assisted living residences in the District of Columbia during Phase Two based on CMS guidelines ([cms.gov/files/document/qso-20-39-nh-revised.pdf](https://www.cms.gov/files/document/qso-20-39-nh-revised.pdf)). The following measures should be taken to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission when indoor visitation occurs. Restrictions on visitation do not apply to compassionate care situations or essential visitors or personnel as defined by Mayor's Order 2020-063.

**Requirements for initiating indoor visitation**

- Outdoor visitation is still preferred over indoor when possible.
- The facility must be participating in weekly staff testing as per DC Health requirements and achieve 90% compliance for at least two consecutive weeks.
- The facility must be **routinely** submitting a COVID-19 line list to the Healthcare Facilities Investigation Team daily Monday-Friday, including holidays.
- Unvaccinated residents must only be allowed indoor visitation if  $\geq 70\%$  of facility residents are fully vaccinated ( $\geq 2$  weeks following receipt of the second dose in a 2-dose series, or  $\geq 2$  weeks following receipt of one dose of a single-dose vaccine) **AND** if the DC positivity rate is  $< 10\%$ .
- The resident being visited must not be undergoing quarantine (including observation) or isolation for a COVID-19 exposure or infection, respectively
- Facilities that have a single case of COVID-19 in staff or residents must be approved by the DC Health COVID-19 Healthcare Facility Teams to start/continue indoor visitation. The following criteria must be met, at minimum:
  - Controlled transmission of COVID-19 within the facility (see 'Visitation during outbreaks' section below).
- Facilities must have a 14-day supply of all personal protective equipment (PPE) that would be necessary to respond to an outbreak, without dependence on or public health stockpiles.
- Facilities must submit a plan to DC Health describing the areas below and details regarding the space identified for visitation.
  - Indoor visitation must occur according to a facility's current and most recently approved plan.
  - Please note that tents with more than 1 sidewall are considered indoors.

**Prior to initiating indoor visitation**

- Notify resident families that indoor visitation is occurring in the facility. The notification should include:
  - Precautions being taken to keep residents safe.
  - Expectations and requirements for visits. Minimally, the notification should include:
    - A description of the symptom screening process.
    - All terms of indoor and outdoor visitation, including mask and social distancing requirements, how to summon staff if needed, and what will cause a visitor to be denied entry.
    - Steps visitors must take before, upon arrival, and during their visit.
    - Terms for physical contact between visitors and resident.
    - The possibility that visitors might be entering a facility when there is an active outbreak occurring
- Ensure the facility is meeting requirements for COVID-19 screening and surveillance

testing of staff and residents.

- Ensure the facility is meeting requirements for resident vaccination coverage if the community positivity rate is >10%.
  - Vaccination coverage among residents must be documented through the DC Health SNF/ALR Vaccination Survey
- Visitors must not be required to be vaccinated; visitors should be strongly encouraged to be fully vaccinated (≥2 weeks following receipt of the second dose in a 2-dose series, or ≥2 weeks following receipt of one dose of a single-dose vaccine) prior to their visit.
- Visitors must not be required to be tested prior to the visit; facilities can encourage visitors get tested prior to their visit

### **When indoor visitation begins**

- Limit indoor visitors to people who can comply with mask and social distancing requirements.
  - Children under the age of 18 must always be accompanied by a guardian and must be able to comply with face covering and social distancing requirements.
- Visitors during a given visit must only be from a single household.
- Visitors during a given visit, must not be allowed to remain on-site and visit multiple residents.
- Visits must be no longer than 30 minutes.
- Require visitors to schedule an appointment for the visit to ensure the facility can safely accommodate the number of people and have enough staff to ensure safety precautions are monitored and enforced.
- Post clear signage if the facility is undergoing an active outbreak investigation; signage must be clearly posted in the following places:
  - At all entrances, including screening area
  - In the visitation area
  - Anywhere else deemed appropriate by DC Health staff
- Greet visitors at a designated area at the entrance of the facility where a staff member must:
  - Screen all visitors and service providers.
    - Perform temperature check and symptom screening.
    - Visitors must be fever-free, symptom-free, and have no known exposure to someone with COVID-19 within the past 14 days.
    - Visitors must not be under quarantine after non-essential travel to a high-risk state as defined on [coronavirus.dc.gov/phasetwo](https://coronavirus.dc.gov/phasetwo), or for international travel to a Level 3 (high-risk) country as defined in the DC Health Travel Guidance.
    - For Screening Tool Guidance, visit [coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance](https://coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance).
  - Ensure the visitor has a face mask or cloth covering that does not have an exhalation valve, and ensure the mask covers the visitor's nose and mouth.
  - Have the visitor clean their hands with alcohol-based hand sanitizer upon entering and exiting the facility, immediately before and immediately after physical touch with the resident.
- Collect and document visitors' full names, phone number, full home address, email, name and room number of the person they are visiting, and maintain records for 30 days to assist with contact tracing.
  - Facility must be able to provide this information to DC Health within 12 hours of it being requested.
- Staff must escort the visitor to the designated visitation area.
  - Visitors are not allowed into any other part of the facility.

- Deny entry to visitors or service providers who do not pass screening or who refuse to comply with any of the requirements.

### **During indoor visitation**

- Visitors must wear cloth face coverings or masks during the entire visit and maintain 6 feet from the resident.
- Visitors must be limited to the area where visitation is designated.
- Visitors must only visit the resident they intend to visit at the designated visitation location.
- Residents are strongly recommended to wear cloth face coverings or face masks at all times during the visit, including the transition to and from the indoor visitation location.
- Limit indoor visitation to areas that allow for appropriate social distancing.
  - The space must have proper ventilation (open windows, etc.).
  - The space must be reserved for the residents and their designated visitors only.
  - There must be specified entries, exits, and pathways to the dedicated space that minimizes exposure to other residents.
  - The number of visitors allowed must not exceed the capacity of the space to accommodate social distancing requirements.
  - The visitation area must only be used by one group of visitors and the resident at a given time.
  - Activity areas commonly used by residents (e.g., dining rooms) are not recommended to be used for visitation unless there are no other options.
- Physical contact between visitors and resident can occur if all the following criteria are met:
  - The resident is fully vaccinated ( $\geq 2$  weeks following receipt of the second dose in a 2-dose series, or  $\geq 2$  weeks following receipt of one dose of a single-dose vaccine)
  - The resident is wearing a well-fitting face mask
  - The resident properly performs hand hygiene immediately before and immediately after touching the visitor; hand hygiene must be supervised by facility staff to ensure it is done correctly
  - The visitor properly performs hand hygiene immediately before and immediately after touching the resident; hand hygiene must be supervised by facility staff to ensure it is done correctly
  - Visitors must maintain 6 feet of physical distance from other residents and staff in the facility
- Resident rooms must only be used for visitation as accommodation for residents who cannot access the area being used for indoor visitation.
  - Visits for residents who share a room should not be conducted in the resident's room, if possible.
  - For situations where there is a roommate and the health status of the resident prevents leaving the room, facilities must attempt to enable in room visitation. Visitors must not use resident facilities, including restrooms. They should instead be directed to restrooms that are not used by residents.
  - Cleaning and disinfection of the room should occur immediately after the visit is completed.

### **After indoor visitation**

- Have the visitor clean their hands with alcohol-based hand sanitizer upon exiting the facility.
- The space designated for visitation must be cleaned and disinfected between visitors.
- The facility must clean and disinfect high touch surfaces (e.g., light switches, elevator buttons, door handles) in the facility at least once a shift.

- No other residents should be allowed in the area until visitations are completed and the area is cleaned and disinfected.

### **Notification of a COVID-19 exposure**

- The facility must provide all visitors with contact information and additional instructions for notifying the facility should they test positive for COVID-19 within 14 days of their visit.
- Facility staff must notify visitors of outbreaks on the unit where the resident resides, should such an event occur within 14 days of a visit, and recommend the visitor(s) seek testing.

### **Visitation during outbreaks**

- When a new case of COVID-19 among residents or staff is identified, the facility must immediately begin outbreak testing, implement DC Health recommendations, and suspend all visitation (except that required for compassionate care and under federal disability rights law), until at least one round of facility-wide testing is completed.
- Visitation can resume based on the following criteria:
  - 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.
- If subsequent rounds of outbreak testing identify one or more additional COVID-19 cases in other areas/units of the facility, then the facility must suspend visitation for all residents (vaccinated and unvaccinated), until
  - the facility has undergone at least two rounds of facility-wide surveillance testing in residents and staff (spaced 3-7 days apart) for 14 consecutive days AND identified no additional cases in staff and residents.
- Areas undergoing outbreaks (units, floors, etc) must have clear and appropriate signage and other markers (e.g. closed doors, floor markings, etc) to ensure visitors do not inadvertently enter the outbreak area.

### **Exclusions**

- Visitors are not required to be vaccinated; however, visitors who cannot comply with face covering, social distancing, hand hygiene and other facility requirements must not participate in indoor or outdoor visitation.
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The guidelines above will continue to be updated as the outbreak evolves. Please visit [coronavirus.dc.gov](https://coronavirus.dc.gov) regularly for the most current information.