



As you know, nursing homes have been under a great deal of public scrutiny throughout this pandemic. As the months tick by, the social isolation caused by visitor restrictions has become a crisis. However, visitor restrictions depend largely upon how well our communities, states, and nation manage this virus.

Many of our members are now facing questions from residents and families about when visitor restrictions will be lifted. Particularly as more residents and staff are vaccinated against COVID-19, there is more impatience with the restrictions. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) continues to review COVID-19 data, along with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), but will not be revising visitation guidance at this time.

With this in mind, remember that current guidance does allow for outdoor visitation, and for indoor visitation if certain criteria are met. However, the status of visitation depends in part upon the status of COVID-19 in the surrounding community.

We have created this fact sheet for LeadingAge members to use in educating residents, families, and the surrounding community on what they can do to help the nursing home get back to visitation. We are providing it as a Word document so that you can make any necessary edits. Feel free to add your company's logo, and along with any additional requirements that may exist in your state.

It will take all of us working together to put an end to this pandemic, and this fact sheet can help.

Five Facts About Visitor Restrictions in Nursing Homes

1. **The federal government issues nursing home visitation restrictions.** The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) restricted visitation in March 2020. Restrictions were [revised](#) in September 2020 to allow some flexibility within strict parameters.
2. **Visitor restrictions apply to everyone.** Those who are vaccinated, those who are considered “essential caregivers”, and those who have recovered from COVID-19 all must follow the same visitor restrictions.
3. **Outdoor visitation is the CMS-preferred method of visitation.** CMS prefers that permitted visitation occur outdoors if possible. The nursing home may be able to access Civil Monetary Penalty (CMP) funds from the state to purchase items to facilitate outdoor visitation in winter weather.
4. **Outdoor visitation can take place under most circumstances.** Unless a nursing home is experiencing a significant outbreak affecting large numbers of residents and/or staff, outdoor visitation is permitted.
5. **Indoor visitation is 100% impacted by how well the surrounding community manages COVID-19.** If the surrounding community shows a [county positivity rate](#) of 10% or greater, indoor visitation is restricted. Indoor visitation is also restricted if the nursing home is experiencing an outbreak, and outbreaks in the nursing home are [tied to high rates of COVID-19 in the community](#).

Five Things You Can Do to Help Nursing Home Visitation Resume

1. **Wear a mask.** Wear a mask any time you leave your house, even if you’re social distancing from others. Masks should cover the mouth and nose.
2. **Social distance and avoid crowds.** Stay at least 2 arms’-length (6 feet) away from anyone who does not live in your household. Avoid gatherings of people who don’t live in your household, especially indoor gatherings. Stay connected by phone or online platforms.
3. **Stay home if you’re sick.** Even if you think it’s just a cold or just the flu, stay home. Don’t go to work, don’t go to your place of worship, don’t even go to the grocery store. Don’t accept visitors either. Call your doctor and get a COVID-19 test if the doctor recommends it.

4. **Get vaccinated when it's your turn.** As more people get vaccinated, fewer people get sick. That leads to fewer cases, fewer deaths, and less opportunity for the virus to mutate into other variants.
5. **Spread the word, not the virus.** Educate others on the steps above and why it is important for us all to do our part. This virus is everyone's problem and we all have a responsibility in the solution.

For more information on COVID-19 and how to protect yourself and others, go to:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>