

New Nursing Facility Visitation Guidelines:

What to Expect When You Visit

A guide for residents and families as nursing facilities in Kansas implement new guidance for visitation released September 17, 2020, by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to address psychosocial needs.

Communication is Key.

Your loved one has the right to visitors. The facility can limit access to protect your loved one and other residents. This balance is difficult, requiring close cooperation between families and friends of residents and the facility administrators.

First Steps.

Call ahead and talk to the administration of the facility where your loved one lives:

- Ask about their plan to reopen to visitors
- What kind of visits can happen and how – indoor, outdoor?

Visit Protocols.

Visitation can be conducted differently based on the facility's environment and residents' needs. For example, visits could take place in resident rooms, dedicated visitation spaces, outdoors, and for circumstances beyond compassionate care situations. Regardless of how visits are conducted, there are certain core principles and best practices facilities should implement to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission, such as:

- Screening visitors for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 (temperature checks, questions about symptoms) and denial of entry for those with signs or symptoms
- Hand hygiene
- Face covering or mask
- Social distancing at least 6 feet between persons
- Appropriate staff use of personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Resident and staff testing as required by CMS guidelines

Outdoor Visits.

While taking a person-centered approach and adhering to the core principles of COVID-19 infection prevention, CMS prefers outdoor visitation that can be conducted in a manner that reduces the risk of transmission whenever practical. Outdoor visits pose a lower risk of transmission due to increased space and airflow.



Indoor Visits.

Facilities in counties with low or medium positivity rates (10% or less) should accommodate and support indoor visitation, including visits for reasons beyond compassionate care situations, based on the following guidelines:

- No new onset of COVID-19 cases in the facility in the last 14 days and not currently conducting outbreak testing
- Visitors are able to adhere to core principles and staff are monitoring for those who have difficulty adhering to core principles, such as children
- Limit the number of visitors per resident at one time and limit the total number of visitors in the facility at one time (based on the size of the building and physical space)
- Limit movement in the facility

Compassionate Care Visits.

Allowing a visit in these situations would be consistent with the intent of compassionate care situations:

- A recently admitted resident who was living with their family before is struggling with the change in environment and lack of physical family support
- A resident who is grieving after a friend or family member recently passed away
- A resident who needs cueing and encouragement with eating or drinking, previously provided by family and/or caregiver(s), is experiencing weight loss or dehydration
- A resident, who used to talk and interact with others, is experiencing emotional distress, seldom speaking, or crying more frequently

