

Effective Date: September 2020

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COVID-19 Essential Caregiver Policy

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance for conducting Essential Caregiver visitation during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Policy

Our Communities recognize the critical role family members and other outside caregivers often have in the care of our residents. As a result, pursuant to HHSC PL 20-38 COVID-19 Response Expansion of Reopening Visitation dated September 24, 2020, approved Essential Caregivers will be permitted to enter the community and aid with activities of daily living and other care needs.

Procedure:

1. A Resident may designate their Essential Caregiver, or an individual can request to be designated an Essential Caregiver. The community may designate an Essential Caregiver based on their known history of providing essential caregiving services.
2. Prior to receiving an essential caregiving visit, each eligible resident (or representative when applicable) will be consulted about their wishes to determine whom they wish to designate as the Essential Caregiver. This individual must have provided regular care to the resident (i.e. a wife who regularly came in to feed her husband)
3. Residents will be permitted to designate more than one Essential Caregiver based on their past involvement and needs (i.e., more than one family member previously split time to provide care for the resident) In these situations, community staff will work cooperatively with the resident and caregiver to work out a schedule to accommodate the Essential Caregivers
4. Each resident/patient can have no more than two people designated as Essential Caregivers.
5. Only one Essential Caregiver will be allowed to visit per day.
6. Resident will NOT be eligible for essential caregiving visits if they are:
 - In a 14-day quarantine period
 - Positive for COVID-19 and have not met the criteria for the discontinuation of isolation or remain symptomatic
 - Symptomatic with COVID-19 signs and symptoms
7. Essential caregiver will NOT be eligible to visit if unable or unwilling to produce suitable evidence of a negative COVID-19 test performed within 72 hours of visit.
8. Once the Administrator, DON, and, or Director of Social Services have approved Essential Caregiver visits, a day and time for the visit(s) will be scheduled.
 - The community will ensure that scheduling of Essential Caregiver visits takes into account the number of Essential Caregivers in the building at the same time.
 - Visits will be limited to no more than two hours in duration. (the community maintains the right to establish time limits as needed to keep residents safe and provide visitation opportunities for all residents)
9. All Essential Caregivers are required to attend infection control and PPE training conducted by a

- licensed nurse prior to their initial visit.
10. Prior to each visit all Essential Caregivers are required to sign an agreement to follow the applicable policies, procedures and requirements including an agreement to leave the community at the appointed time.
 11. Core principles of pandemic infection prevention will always be adhered to in and on outside property of the community include but are not limited to:
 - Screening of all who enter the community for signs and symptoms of the pandemic agent including but not limited to:
 - A. Temperature checks
 - B. Questions for screening of signs and symptoms of COVID-19
 - C. Questions related to recent exposure to others with signs and symptoms or confirmed COVID-19.
 - D. Any person with signs or symptoms of infection will be denied entry to the community.
 - Hand hygiene will be performed with the use of alcohol-based product prior to and following visit.
 - Mask will always be worn by visitor and resident and must cover both mouth and nose.
 - Instructional signage will be placed throughout the community to include proper visitation education on the pandemic and infection control practices.
 - Cleaning and disinfecting high frequency touched services will occur after each visit.
 - Appropriate use of PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) must be strictly adhered to during visit.
 - Effective cohabitating of residents (e.g., separate areas dedicated to COVID-19 care)
 - The community will complete resident and staff testing as required by CMS (Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services) the state and local health department. 42 CFR 483.80 (h) (see QSO-20-38-NH)

These core principles are consistent with the Centers for Disease control and Prevention. (CDC guidance) for nursing homes and will be followed at all times. Additionally, visitation will be person-centered, consider the resident's physical, mental, and psychosocial well-being, and support their quality of life. Visitors who are unable to adhere to the core principles of COVID-19 infection prevention will not be permitted to visit or will be asked to leave the premises. By following a person-centered approach and adhering to these core principles, visitation can occur safely with the following guidance.

The visitation process:

1. Pre-arranged times will be scheduled through each community designated scheduler.
2. **Visitors are required to be tested for COVID-19 on their own prior to coming to the community (within 72 hours) with proof of negative test results and date of test.**
3. Families and or/visitors may be asked to wait outside the entrance of the building until the scheduled visitation is to commence.
4. Visitors will be required to provide a government issued form of photo identification.
5. Community team member will issue a name badge which must be worn and visible at all times during visit.
6. Prior to visit, the assigned staff visit supervisor will discuss parameters with the visitor(s) to ensure compliance with policy.
7. All visitors will then complete the COVID screening assessment form. The form **MUST** be approved by the visit supervisor prior to entrance to the visitation areas.
8. Once the visitor has successfully completed the screening assessment, the visitor will be screened for temperature.

- ANY PERSON WITH A READING OF 99.6 DEGREES FARENHEIT OR HIGHER, OR WHO IS SYMPTOMATIC WILL BE DENIED THE VISIT TO PROTECT THE SAFETY OF OUR RESIDENTS AND TEAM MEMBERS.
9. All parties will be required to wear a medical grade mask. The community will provide one for them.
 10. All visiting parties are required to perform hand hygiene at the time of entrance to the building and will be instructed to perform hand hygiene periodically during the visit and at the time of ending the visitation. The community will provide alcohol-based hand sanitizer for visitors to use.
 11. Once the pre-screening is completed; visitors will be escorted to the visitation area.
 12. Essential Caregivers are not required to maintain social distance with the resident they are designated for. Essential Caregivers will be instructed to not make physical contact with any other resident or Team Member and that they must maintain the recommended 6 feet of social distancing.
 13. All visiting parties will be required to follow the “screening out” process once visit commences before exiting the community.

A laminated protocol instruction sheet will be placed at the screening table outlining the core principles of infection control. The instruction sheet will also reference guidelines for each visit.

References, Policies, and Forms

- CDC Guidance for [COVID-19-Like Illness](#)
- CMS Guidance for Visitation: [QSO-20-39](#)
- CDC Guidance on [Cohorting Residents](#)