



**NEVADA
HEALTH
RESPONSE**

Nevada Health Response:
Guidance on Hospital and Skilled Nursing Facility Visitation
October 2020

Summary: Nevadans have made enormous sacrifices in order to slow the spread of COVID-19. The necessity to protect hospital patients and the vulnerable populations in nursing homes was identified early in the pandemic and federal measures were put in place by facilities and regulatory agencies to restrict entry into these facilities, to essential personnel only in accordance with U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS).

In recent months, restrictions on visitation have eased to allow family members to visit loved ones. The Nevada Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Bureau of Health Care Quality and Compliance (HCQC) is responsible for determining compliance/non-compliance with federal regulations and guidance, as well as State regulations, in facilities, including skilled nursing facilities. The Nevada DHHS prepared an overview of the role HCQC plays and the evolution of CMS regulations guiding these decisions that is available [HERE](#).

Are visitors prohibited in hospitals due to COVID-19 under Nevada Emergency Directives?

- No: decisions on admission or restrictions on visitors are made by individual hospitals in compliance with federal guidance issued by CDC and CMS. In the early stages of the pandemic, Nevada hospitals adopted restrictions limiting visitors to protect the health and safety of patients, visitors and medical personnel and mitigate

the spread of COVID-19. As [announced by the Nevada Hospital Association \(NHA\) on May 28](#), members of the NHA resumed limited visitation policies for non-COVID-19 patients under which friends and family may be allowed to visit loved ones under enhanced safety measures. Each member hospital disseminates information on its respective policies and safety measures, which may vary or be more restrictive, depending on the facility. Enhanced safety measures for visitors may include the following:

- Wearing a mask at all times
- Observing hand hygiene practices
- Conducting health screenings upon each entry
- Limiting the number of visitors
- Limiting visiting hours
- Implementing strict social distancing protocols

Are visitors currently prohibited in skilled nursing facilities due to COVID-19?

- No, but visitation remains restricted under CMS rules: On September 17, 2020, CMS issued new rules for allowing limited visitation during COVID-19, and the Nevada HCQC is assisting facilities to implement the new rules allowing for visitation under the safety guidelines. CMS issued the following statement regarding the new rules, and a link to the memorandum is available [here](#):

Today, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) issued revised guidance providing detailed recommendations on ways nursing homes can safely facilitate visitation during the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. After several months of visitor restrictions designed to slow the spread of COVID-19, CMS recognizes that physical separation from family and other loved ones has taken a significant toll on nursing home residents. In light of this, and in combination with increasingly available data to guide policy development, CMS is issuing revised guidance to help nursing homes facilitate visitation in both indoor and outdoor settings and in compassionate care situations. The guidance also outlines certain core principles and best practices to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission to

adhere to during visitations.

The vulnerable nature of the nursing home population, combined with the inherent risks of congregate living in a healthcare setting, have required aggressive efforts to limit COVID-19 exposure, including limiting visitation. As a result, in [March 2020](#), CMS issued guidance instructing facilities to restrict visitation except for certain compassionate care situations. In May 2020, CMS released [Nursing Home Reopening Recommendations](#), which provided guidance on visitation as nursing homes progress through the phases of reopening. In June 2020, CMS also released a [Frequently Asked Questions](#) document on visitation, which expanded on previously issued guidance on outdoor visits, compassionate care situations, and communal activities.

In the revised guidance issued today, CMS is encouraging nursing homes to facilitate outdoor visitation because it can be conducted in a manner that reduces the risk of transmission. Outdoor visits pose a lower risk of transmission due to increased space and airflow. The guidance released today also allows for indoor visitation if there has been no new onset of COVID-19 cases in the past 14 days and the facility is not conducting outbreak testing per CMS guidelines. Indoor visitation is subject to other requirements as well as indicated in the guidance.

Additional Information:

- [CDC - Healthcare Facilities: Managing Operations During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)
- [CDC – Responding to Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) in Nursing Homes](#)
- [CMS – Announcement on New Guidance for Safe Visitation in Nursing Homes and Public Health Action for Nursing Homes on COVID-19 as of September 17, 2020](#)

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