



Increased Visitation in Long Term Care Facilities

Tennessee Department of Health (TDH) recognizes the difficult challenges long term care facilities have faced in protecting vulnerable residents during the COVID-19 response. This document provides guidance for Tennessee Long Term Care Facilities (skilled nursing facilities, assisted living care facilities, and residential homes for the aged) when establishing steps to gradually “re-open” after closures to visitors due to COVID-19 restrictions. Beginning October 1, 2020, these guidelines will remain in effect until replaced or amended with additional guidance.

Facilities will continue to monitor for COVID-19 cases in residents and staff, through appropriate screening and testing. Facilities should be prepared to discontinue visitation and activities if the facility develops one or more new cases amongst residents or staff.



Resuming Visitation

Visitation Opportunities Always Allowed

The following visits are always allowed:

- Accommodations or support for residents with disabilities;
- Critical assistance;
- Compassionate care/end-of-life situations; or
- Involvement in a religious exercise.

Visitors must make arrangements with the facility, practice proper social distancing and hand hygiene, and wear a face covering for the duration of their visit.

Visitation Opportunities Allowed After 14 Days of no new COVID-19 cases

Other than in a dedicated wing or unit that accepts COVID-19 cases from the community, facilities that have had no new COVID-19 cases (residents and/or staff) in the previous fourteen (14) days may permit outdoor and limited indoor visitation.

Outdoor Visitation

Outdoor visits on the facility grounds may be conducted as allowed by the following:

- Safe and appropriate outdoor space has been identified on the facility's campus to provide for seating spaced at least six (6) feet apart.
- Program area is only used when weather permits.
- Visits are scheduled in advance;
- Last no more than forty-five (45) minutes.
- Prior to visitation, requirements are acknowledged and agreed upon by the visitors.
- Outdoor visits are limited to not more than two (2) persons (not including the resident) and no children under the age of eighteen (18).
- Visitors are screened before entry into the outdoor visitation area including temperature checks and hand sanitization.
- Residents and visitors wear a face covering and maintain physical distancing.
- Facility establishes sufficient space between individual group seating arrangements, so six (6) feet of physical distancing can be maintained



- between the groups. Capacity should be based on physical space and ability to staff the area.
- Seating accommodations are sanitized by staff between uses. Staff should remain in sight of the visiting group, in order to encourage safety precautions are followed.
- Visitors unable to pass the screening or comply with infection control practices should be prohibited from visiting.
- Visitors should be asked to self-monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 for fourteen (14) days and immediately report any symptoms or positive COVID-19 test to the local health department and the facility.

Limited Indoor Visitation

Indoor visitation should be limited to designated common spaces that allow for appropriate social distancing and cleaning/disinfection between visitors. Visits in designated indoor spaces should include:

- Safe and appropriate indoor space has been identified in the facility to provide for seating spaced at least six (6) feet apart.
- Visits are scheduled in advance.
- Last no more than forty-five (45) minutes.
- Prior to visitation, requirements should be acknowledged and agreed upon by the visitors.
- Indoor visits should be limited to not more than two (2) persons (not including the resident) and no children under the age of eighteen (18).
- Visitors should be screened before entry into the designated indoor area including temperature checks and proper hand sanitization.
- Residents and visitors should always wear a face covering and maintain physical distancing during the visit.
- Facility should establish sufficient space between individual group seating arrangements, so six (6) feet of physical distancing can be maintained between the groups. Capacity is based on physical space and ability to staff the area.
- Seating accommodations should be sanitized by staff between uses. Indoor visitation rooms must follow all applicable life safety guidance.
- Visitors unable to pass the screening or comply with infection control practices should be prohibited from visiting.
- Visitors should be asked to self-monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 for fourteen (14) days and immediately report any symptoms or positive COVID-19 test to the local health department and the facility.



Resident rooms should only be used for visitation as an accommodation for residents who cannot access the designated common area for indoor visitation.

Indoor visitation is allowed in a resident’s room when:

- Resident is unable to leave the room **AND**
- Visitor has had negative PCR test collected within previous 72 hours **OR**
- Visitor has negative onsite point-of-care-test at the facility.

Visitation Opportunities Allowed After 28 Days of no new COVID-19 cases

In addition to outdoor and limited indoor visitation, once there have been no new COVID-19 cases in the facility’s residents or staff for at least twenty-eight (28) days, facilities may also allow for indoor visits by essential caregivers.

Essential Caregivers

Essential caregivers (EC) are defined by designating a family member or guardian who, prior to visitation restrictions, was regularly engaged with the resident in activities of daily living (bathing, feeding, clothing, etc.) Essential caregiving visitation includes the following:

- Visitation should be scheduled with time restrictions.
- Each resident may have **up to** five (5) individuals designated as an EC although no more than two (2) at a time can visit per resident.
- ECs should be screened before entry into the facility including temperature checks and proper hand sanitization.
- Residents and ECs should wear a face covering and maintain physical distancing from other residents and staff.
- ECs are subject to the regular testing required of the staff (see testing frequency table below as established by CMS Rules). This could be accomplished by:
 - EC has negative PCR test collected within previous 72 hours **OR**
 - EC has negative onsite point-of-care test at the facility.

Table 2: Routine Testing Intervals Vary by Community COVID-19 Activity Level

Community COVID-19 Activity	County Positivity Rate in the past week	Minimum Testing Frequency
Low	<5%	Once a month
Medium	5% - 10%	Once a week*
High	>10%	Twice a week*

*This frequency presumes availability of Point of Care testing on-site at the nursing home or where off-site testing turnaround time is <48 hours.