



The risk of serious illness and mortality from COVID-19 is high in the elderly and persons with underlying medical conditions. In order to mitigate risk of COVID-19 transmission, the Tennessee Department of Health (TDH) strongly recommends that persons continue to use social distancing options such as electronic or virtual communication to spend time with a family member, friend, fellow resident, loved one, or other person ("Resident") in a nursing home, retirement home, long-term care facility, or assisted-living facility ("Facility" or "Facilities"). However, in accordance with executive order of the governor, TDH has established the following guidelines to permit limited visitation within Facilities.

Persons should not visit a Resident in a Facility unless:

- i. The Facility determines that the visit:
 1. (A) Involves accommodations for support for Residents with disabilities, the provision of critical assistance to a Resident, or religious exercise; or (B) Is to a Resident receiving end-of-life care; and
 2. May be accomplished without unreasonable risk to other residents or staff; or
- ii. The Facility determines that the visit may be conducted in accordance with the TDH's guidelines regarding Facility visitation, as may be periodically amended, which permit:
 1. Visitation utilizing procedures designed to reduce Residents and staff risk of exposure to COVID-19, subject to prerequisites and guidelines established by TDH; and
 2. Visitation to a Resident's room in a Facility when the visiting person has documentation of a negative COVID-19 polymerase chain reaction ("PCR") test result from a sample taken during the 72 hours preceding the visit, subject to any prerequisites and guidelines established by TDH.

The following prerequisites and guidelines apply to visitation conducted pursuant to paragraph (ii) above:

Facility Prerequisites for Visitation:

1. Facility has completed one-time COVID-19 testing of all residents and all full-time, part-time and contracted employees ("Staff"), pursuant to Board for Licensing Health Care Facilities regulations.
2. Facility maintains compliance with Board for Licensing Health Care Facilities regulations regarding weekly staff testing (nursing homes only).
3. Facility has not had a new case of COVID-19 in staff or residents in the last 28 days. If a new case of COVID-19 in staff or residents is identified, visitation procedures should be immediately stopped, except those outlined in (i) above.
4. Facility is able to maintain staffing levels without resorting to crisis capacity strategies.
5. Facility is compliant with all Tennessee Department of Health Board of Licensing Health Care Facilities rules.
6. Facility has a preparedness and response plan updated for COVID-19, including:
 - Infection prevention program plan;
 - Adequate supply of personal protective equipment without resorting to crisis capacity strategies; and
 - Testing plan (including identified laboratory, ordering provider and specimen collection procedures) to ensure rapid availability of COVID-19 testing should there be suspicion of infection among Staff or Resident.



7. COVID-19 disease burden in the community (defined as county where Facility is located) is stable. This is defined as \leq an average of 10 new cases per 100,000 persons over the prior 14 days. These data are available on the Tennessee Department of Health COVID-19 website.

Visitation Guidelines:

1. Persons visiting (“Visitor”) must make an appointment with Facility prior to visitation.
2. Visitors must be limited to no more than two individuals per Resident at any one time.
3. Staff trained in patient safety and infection control measures must remain with the Resident at all times during a visit to supervise and enforce social distancing (>6 feet in distance between Visitor and Resident, regardless of visitation setting) and mask requirements (Visitor must wear a cloth mask for the duration of the visit; Resident and Staff must wear surgical mask for the duration of the visit).
4. Facility must screen Visitor with symptom and temperature checks immediately upon entry to Facility. If any symptoms consistent with COVID-19 or elevated temperature (>100.4°F) are detected, Visitor should not be permitted to enter the Facility.
5. Options for Visitation:
 - **Designated outdoor space:** TDH’s preferred option is for Visitor and Resident to meet in a designated outdoor visitation space.
 - a. Transport of the Resident to and from the designated outdoor visitation space must be safe and orderly. At a minimum, the resident cannot be transported through any space designated as COVID-19 care space or space where residents suspected or confirmed to be infected with COVID-19 are present.
 - b. Visits with a Resident in a designated outdoor space are dependent on permissible weather conditions and availability of outdoor space.
 - c. Visitor and Resident must maintain social distancing (>6 feet in distance) and abide by mask requirements (Visitor must wear a cloth mask for the duration of the visit; Resident must wear surgical mask for the duration of the visit).
 - d. High-touch surfaces within outdoor visitation areas should be comprehensively cleaned between visits according to COVID-19 specific environmental cleaning guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
 - **Visitation booth:** Visitor and Resident may meet in a designated indoor or outdoor space with an external entrance if a visitation booth that meets minimum life safety code requirements is available.
 - a. An appropriate visitation booth necessitates a protective, non-porous barrier between the Resident and Visitor, such as, but not limited to, a three-sided plexiglass shield arranged in a manner such that a Resident may sit behind the barrier during a visit. Such booth should have anti-tipping protections and be of adequate height to rise above a seated person’s head.
 - b. Transport of the Resident to and from the designated indoor visitation space must be safe and orderly. At a minimum, the resident cannot be transported through any space designated as COVID-19 care space or space where residents suspected or confirmed to be infected with COVID-19 are present.
 - c. Indoor visitation space must have an external entrance for Visitor to enter directly from outside the Facility.



- d. Visitation booth must meet minimum life safety code requirements These requirements can be reviewed at: <https://www.tn.gov/health/health-program-areas/hcf-professionals.html>
- e. Visitation booth and high-touch surfaces adjacent to the booth must be comprehensively cleaned between visits according to COVID-19 specific environmental cleaning guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- f. Visitor and Resident must maintain social distancing (>6 feet in distance) and abide by mask requirements (Visitor must wear a cloth mask for the duration of the visit; Resident must wear surgical mask for the duration of the visit).
- g. Visits with a Resident in a visitation booth are dependent on availability of the visitation booth space and adequate time for disinfection and cleaning between visits.
- **In-room visitation:** Visitor may be allowed to visit Resident's room only if the Visitor has documentation of a negative COVID-19 polymerase chain reaction ("PCR") test result from a sample taken during the 72 hours preceding the visit.
 - a. Facility must review and document a record of Visitor's negative COVID-19 PCR test result. This information must be readily accessible for reference and review by public health officials should future cases of COVID-19 be identified in the Facility.
 - b. Visitor should not pass through any area designated as COVID-19 care space or space where residents suspected or confirmed to be infected with COVID-19 are present.
 - c. Resident and Visitor must be the sole occupants of the room during the visit, except for Staff.
 - d. Visit must not last longer than 45 minutes in duration.
 - e. Visitor and Resident must maintain social distancing (>6 feet in distance) and abide by mask requirements (Visitor must wear a cloth mask for the duration of the visit; Resident must wear surgical mask for the duration of the visit).

Implementation of these guidelines should be made in consultation with facility Medical Director or a professional medical opinion of the Resident's treating physician or other healthcare providers involved in the Resident's care, as applicable, on a case-by-case basis. Facilities should also ensure that any Resident with disabilities is afforded visitation, as needed, by ancillary service providers (sign-language interpreters, behavioral health support personnel, etc.), or other visitation by persons necessary to support care decisions or disability-related needs, in order to maintain open lines of communication and continuation of needed services in light of individual Resident needs. Facilities should consult with corporate offices regarding policies and plans for implementation of visitation.

At all times:

- a. Facilities should screen any permitted visitors, including support persons, to reduce the risk of infection among Residents and Facility personnel.
- b. Facilities should limit the number of Visitors per Resident and the number of Visitors per Facility daily to ensure staff availability for supervision.
- c. Facilities shall at all times follow the Health Guidelines and any other infection control rules, policies, or recommendations or guidance set forth by TDH or other applicable state and federal agencies or departments.
- d. Facilities shall take reasonable steps to minimize the movement of staff to more than one Facility location whenever possible.



Department of
Health

COVID-19

Long-Term Care Facility
Visitation Guidance