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# Ongoing COVID-related Issues in LTC: Barriers to Visitation

Fred Steele, State Long Term Care Ombudsman



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# State & Federal Visitation Guidance

- Jan. 29 ODHS to all NFs, ALFs, RCFs:
  - Opened indoor visitation in counties below Extreme risk
- March 10 CMS to NFs:
  - Directed indoor visitation “at all times and for all residents” (unless exception)
- March 26 ODHS to ALFs, RCFs:
  - Visitation “at all times and for all residents” 14 days after 2<sup>nd</sup> vaccination clinic (unless exception)



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# Exceptions preventing indoor visitation

- Only 5 visitors or 20% of resident population (whichever less)
- ODHS “Executive Order” due to active COVID case
- If quarantine of a resident is advised under public health guidance
- If county positivity rate  $>10\%$  AND  $<70\%$  residents are vaccinated, then unvaccinated residents can’t have visitors
- NOTE: only Adult Foster Homes are now allowed to prohibit visitors during “extreme risk” designations



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# Standing Rights to Visitation

- Nursing Facilities: OAR 411-085-0330
  - “Residents’ Rights: Visitor Access”
- Assisted Living/Residential Care/Memory Care/Adult Foster Homes
  - OAR 411-004-0020(2)(h) – “Each individual may have visitors of his or her choosing at any time.”



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# Good Practices

- Screening visitors for symptoms or potential COVID contacts
- Creating designated waiting areas outside
- Visitor logs required
- Hand sanitizing required
- Masks required

# Visitation Barriers

- Facilities still not allowing visitors indoors mid-late April
- Limited days & Limited hours
  - Monday – Friday, 10-11:30 & 3:30-5:00
- “Visitors will be limited to once per week”
- “Visits are limited to 30 minutes”
- Only visits in “designated visitation area” (not in resident rooms)
- Visits must be scheduled in advance
  
- “Extreme risk” designations last week incorrectly resulted in barring indoor visits in some RCFs/ALFs/NFs



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# Resident Impacts

- Court appointed guardian denied access because resident already had a visitor that day
- Family member wanting to visit even during ODHS Executive Order, because garbage emptying, sheet changing, showers, nail trim, only occur if family member does these things
- Visit not allowed because not scheduled; would not even accommodate switching with another visitor



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# Improvement Opportunities?

- Return focus on residents
  - Limited visitor hours/contacts appear to be for the benefit of the facility & staffing
  - LTCO understanding of guidance: set visiting hours to accommodate residents if needed (within 5 visitor limitation at any given time)
- New approach needed for conveying policy/guidance changes?
  - i.e., require receipt acknowledgement?





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# Overall Concerns for Residents

- Potential significant weight losses being identified
- Numerous reports of resident cognitive decline
- Increase of residents going on hospice?
  - Potentially to supplement low staffing?
- Ongoing quarantines, even of vaccinated residents, if exiting/returning to their facilities
- Increased recent ODHS EOs, with many due to staff with COVID



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