Coronavirus (COVID-19)  
**Assisted Living Facility**

*Visitation Frequently Asked Questions*

On March 13, 2020, and in subsequent renewals, Governor Greg Abbott declared a state of disaster for all counties in Texas due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Governor Abbott also directed state agencies to restrict visitors to assisted living facilities (ALFs) and other long-term care facilities to protect those most vulnerable to COVID-19 infection.

The Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) is committed to sharing pertinent COVID-19 information with all ALFs via a regularly updated Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document.

Questions regarding these FAQ can be directed to Long-term Care Regulation, Policy, Rules & Training, at 512-438-3161 or PolicyRulesTraining@hhsc.state.tx.us.

**Essential Caregiver**

**Who is considered to be an essential caregiver?**

*Answer:* An essential caregiver is a family member or other outside caregiver, including a friend, volunteer, private personal caregiver, or court appointed guardian, who is at least 18 years old and is designated to provide regular care and support to a resident. An essential caregiver visit is permitted in all facilities for COVID-19 negative and unknown COVID-19 status residents.

**What are the responsibilities of an essential caregiver?**

*Answer:* The essential caregiver must:

- wear a facemask over both the mouth and nose and any other appropriate PPE recommended by CDC guidance and the facility’s policy while in the assisted living facility;
- have a negative COVID-19 test no more than 14 days before the first essential caregiver visit, unless the assisted living facility chooses to perform a rapid test prior to entry into facility;
• sign an agreement to leave the facility at the appointed time unless otherwise approved by the facility;
• self-monitor for signs and symptoms of COVID-19;
• not participate in visits if the designated essential caregiver has signs and symptoms of COVID-19, active COVID-19 infection, or other communicable diseases; and
• does not participate in visits if the resident has an active COVID-19 infection.

**What are the requirements an ALF must ensure for an essential caregiver visit?**

*Answer:* The following requirements apply to ALFs allowing essential caregiver visits:

• inform the essential caregiver of applicable facility policies, procedures, and requirements;
• approve the visitor’s facemask and any other appropriate PPE recommended by CDC guidance and the facility’s policy, or provide an approved facemask and other PPE;
• maintain documentation of the essential caregiver visitor’s agreement to follow the applicable policies, procedures, and requirements;
• maintain documentation of the essential caregiver visitor’s training;
• maintain documentation of the date of the last COVID-19 test as reported by the essential caregiver;
• document the identity of each essential caregiver in the resident’s records and verify the identity of the essential caregiver by creating an essential caregiver visitor badge;
• maintain a record of each essential caregiver visit; and
• prohibit visitation by the essential caregiver if the resident has an active COVID-19 infection.

**Are persons previously designated as “compassionate care” visitors automatically designated as essential caregivers?**

*Answer:* No. If someone was previously designated as a “compassionate care” visitor due to a resident’s failure to thrive, the person does not automatically become an essential caregiver. The person must be re-designated by the resident or resident’s LAR and meet all associated requirements for essential caregivers.
Will the facility be responsible for testing essential caregivers?

*Answer:* A facility is required to develop and enforce a testing strategy for essential caregivers but is not required to provide nor pay for any essential caregiver testing. Facility policy can require essential caregivers go to a testing site. If the facility chooses to test an essential caregiver on site, it will need a CLIA waiver.

What training is required for an essential caregiver?

*Answer:* The facility must ensure that each designated essential caregiver is trained on proper personal protective equipment (PPE) usage and infection control measures, hand hygiene, and cough and sneeze etiquette. The facility must have this training documented.

What information is required in each essential caregiver’s record?

*Answer:* Each facility will be required to maintain a record of each essential caregiver visit that includes:

- the date and time of the arrival and departure of the essential caregiver visitor;
- the name of the essential caregiver visitor;
- the name of the resident being visited; and
- attestation that the identity of the essential caregiver visitor was confirmed.

Can the essential caregiver visit the resident every day?

*Answer:* This would be up to each individual facility to determine. There is not a rule that prohibits an essential caregiver from visiting every day. However, an ALF may adjust the number and duration of essential caregiver visits allowed to accommodate all residents’ needs. Also, visits must be scheduled ahead of time, and facility staff must escort the essential caregiver to and from the designated visitation area. Staff do not have to monitor the visit itself.

Do essential caregivers need to wear full PPE during visits?

*Answer:* A mask is always required. If the resident has a COVID-19 unknown status, additional PPE may be needed. Essential caregivers must follow CDC guidance and any facility policies that are in place.
Does the essential caregiver visit have to be monitored by facility staff?

Answer: No, because essential caregivers should be trained in the use of PPE and infection policies and practices.

Salon Services

Are salon services allowed in the ALF?

Answer: Yes. A facility can only allow a salon services visitor to enter the facility to provide services to a resident if the salon services visitor passes the screening; the salon services visitor agrees to comply with the most current version of the Minimum Standard Health Protocols- Checklist for Cosmetology Salons/Hair Salons, located on website: https://open.texas.gov/; and the visitor adheres to the following:

- each visit is limited to two hours, unless the assisted living facility determines that it can only accommodate a visit for a shorter duration or that it can accommodate a longer duration and adjusts the duration of the visit accordingly.
- The visit can occur outdoors, in the resident’s bedroom, or in another area in the facility that limits visitor movement through the facility and interaction with other residents.
- Salon services visitors do not have to maintain physical distancing between themselves and each resident they are visiting, but they must maintain physical distancing between themselves and all other residents and staff.
- The resident must wear a facemask or face covering (if tolerated) throughout the visit.
- The assisted living facility must develop and enforce salon services visitation policies and procedures.

What are the conditions for having a hairdresser/barber in the facility?

Answer: The following requirements must be met for allowing a beautician or barber into the facility:

- Each visit is limited to two hours, unless the assisted living facility determines that it can accommodate a visit for a shorter or longer duration or and adjusts the duration of the visit accordingly.
• The visit can occur outdoors, in the resident’s bedroom, or in another area in the facility that limits visitor movement through the facility and interaction with other residents.
• Salon services visitors do not have to maintain physical distancing between themselves and each resident they are visiting, but they must maintain physical distancing between themselves and all other residents and staff.
• The resident must wear a facemask or face covering (if tolerated) throughout the visit.
• The assisted living facility must develop and enforce salon services visitation policies and procedures.

What does the ALF have to enforce if the facility allows a salon service visitor into the facility?

Answer: The assisted living facility must develop and enforce salon services visitation policies and procedures, which include:

• a testing strategy for salon services visitors;
• a written agreement that the salon services visitor understands and agrees to follow the applicable policies, procedures, and requirements;
• training each salon services visitor on proper PPE usage and infection control measures, hand hygiene, and cough and sneeze etiquette;
• the salon services visitor must wear a facemask and any other appropriate PPE recommended by CDC guidance and the facility’s policy while in the assisted living facility;
• expectations regarding using only designated entrances and exits as directed;
• limiting visitation to the area designated by the facility in accordance with (o)(2) of this subsection;
• facility staff must escort the salon services visitor from the facility entrance to the designated visitation area at the start of each visit; and facility staff must escort the salon services visitor from the designated visitation area to the facility exit at the end of each visit. Staff do not have to monitor the salon services visit.

What records does an ALF have to maintain for a salon service visit?

Answer: An ALF must maintain a record of each salon services visit, including:
• the date and time of the arrival and departure of the salon services visitor;
• the name of the salon services visitor;
• the name of the resident being visited; and
• attestation that the identity of the salon services visitor was confirmed.

What information will be required to be in a facility’s salon visitation policies and procedures?

Answer: The assisted living facility must develop and enforce salon services visitation policies and procedures, which include:

• a testing strategy for salon services visitors;
• a written agreement that the salon services visitor understands and agrees to follow the applicable policies, procedures, and requirements;
• training each salon services visitor on proper PPE usage and infection control measures, hand hygiene, and cough and sneeze etiquette;
• a salon services visitor must wear a facemask and any other appropriate PPE recommended by CDC guidance and the facility’s policy while in the assisted living facility;
• expectations regarding using only designated entrances and exits as directed;
• limiting visitation to the area designated by the facility;
• that facility staff must escort the salon services visitor from the facility entrance to the designated visitation area at the start of each visit; and
• that facility staff must escort the salon services visitor from the designated visitation area to the facility exit at the end of each visit.

Can a salon services visitor who visits the facility work in a public salon? Also, can he or she provide salon services visits in more than one LTC facility?

Answer: The rules do not prohibit salon services visitors from working in public salons or providing visits to more than one facility. However, such a visitor would need to meet rule requirements and could be restricted from such activities or be required to meet more stringent screening requirements under a facility’s policies and procedures.
General Visitation

None of our residents have been tested. Should we get them tested so we know for sure they are negative?

Answer: An ALF is not required to test residents, and if it chooses to test residents, a resident has the right to refuse testing. If a resident has no symptoms and does not have unknown COVID-19 status (has not left the facility in the last 14 days and has no known exposure to COVID-19) then the resident is presumed COVID-19 negative. A resident with unknown COVID-19 status is defined as a resident who is a new admission, readmission, or has spent one or more nights away from the facility, has had known exposure or close contact with a person who is COVID-19 positive, or who is exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 while awaiting test results.

What types of visits are allowed for a positive resident?

Answer: Closed-window visits and end-of-life visits are permitted for residents who are COVID-19 positive.

Do the rules for essential caregiver visitors apply to family and friends of residents?

Answer: The rules for essential caregivers only apply to a family member or friend who has been designated as an essential caregiver. Prior to gaining access to a facility, the essential caregiver must meet conditions listed in 42 TAC §553.2003. Family members and friends who are not designated essential caregivers are limited to outdoor and plexiglass indoor visitation.

What information is required for salon or essential care visitor badges?

Answer: Salon or essential care visitor badges must identify the visitor by name and state the purpose of the visit.

What information is required in a facility’s visitation policies and procedures?

Answer: The assisted living facility must develop and enforce essential caregiver visitation policies and procedures, which include:

- a COVID-19 testing strategy for designated essential caregivers;
- a written agreement that the essential caregiver understands and agrees to follow the applicable policies, procedures, and requirements;
• training each designated essential caregiver on proper personal protective equipment (PPE) usage and infection control measures, hand hygiene, and cough and sneeze etiquette;
• requiring a facemask and other appropriate PPE recommended by CDC guidance and the facility’s policy while in the assisted living facility;
• expectations for caregivers regarding using only designated entrances and exits as directed;
• limiting visitation to the outdoor visitation area, the resident’s room, or another area of the facility that limits the visitor’s movement through the facility and interaction with other residents;
• facility staff must escort the essential caregiver from the facility entrance to the designated visitation area at the start of each visit; and
• facility staff must escort the essential caregiver from the designated visitation area to the facility exit at the end of each visit.

What additional postings will an ALF be required to have for visitation?

Answer: An assisted living facility must provide instructional signage throughout the facility and proper visitor education regarding:

• the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 infection;
• infection control precautions; and other applicable facility practices (e.g. use of facemask or other appropriate PPE, specified entries and exits, routes to be designated visitation areas, hand hygiene).

Is a facility previously approved for phase 1 visitation required to complete another attestation form for expanded visitation?

Answer: If a facility has previously been approved for phase 1 visitation, it does not need to fill out another attestation form for expanded visitation. However, if the facility was only approved in phase 1 for outdoor visitation and now requests indoor plexiglass visitation, the facility would need to fill out an expanded visitation form for the indoor visitation request.