



## Overview: Expansion of Reopening Visitation for Long-term Care Facilities

While Phase 1 visitation has been in place since early August, there are strict limitations on the visits that are permitted and in which facilities they can occur. Expanding visitation to COVID negative residents in all long-term care (LTC) facilities and allowing the designation of essential caregivers for residents are important next steps in improving the health and well-being of residents.

In addition, trend analysis of available COVID-19 data supports expansion of visitation in LTC facilities. The next steps outlined below are based on feedback and recommendations from legislative members, providers, families, and other stakeholders.

### Next Steps for Reopening Visitation in LTC Facilities

- Five facility types and five new emergency rule packets:
  - Nursing Facilities (NF)
  - Assisted Living Facilities (ALF)
  - Intermediate Care Facilities (ICF), including the State Supported Living Centers
  - Home and Community Services (HCS/TxHML)
  - Inpatient Hospice
  
- Testing Requirements for surveyors, facilities, and essential caregivers:
  - HHSC LTC surveyors will be tested every two weeks as provided by HHSC policy.
  
  - NF – testing requirements will transition to CMS requirements, removing current weekly testing. [County positivity levels](#) are provided by CMS.
  
  - Essential caregivers, as defined in the emergency rules, must have a negative COVID-19 test result from a test performed no more than 14 days before the first essential caregiver visit, unless the facility chooses to perform a rapid test prior to entry into the facility.
  
- Expanded Reopening Visitation:
  - Phase 1 requirements all remain in place (except for compassionate care visits, which are being replaced with less restrictive essential

caregiver visits.) However, NFs will be allowed limited indoor visits with plexiglass barriers, and the testing requirement in NFs would transition to CMS requirements. This allows extended families and others to visit facilities with no COVID infection in the following ways: outdoors, at windows, car parades, and indoor visits with plexiglass. Visitors must be screened, and the visitor log must be maintained. Inpatient hospice will be included in the expanded reopening of visitation.

- To receive a facility visitation designation, a facility must demonstrate that it has separate areas, units, wings, halls, or buildings designated for COVID-19 positive, COVID-19 negative, and unknown COVID-19 status resident cohorts; separate dedicated staff are working exclusively in the separate areas, units, wings, halls, or buildings; and there have been no confirmed COVID-19 cases for at least 14 consecutive days in staff working in the area, unit, wing, hall, or building that accommodates residents who are COVID-19 negative.
- All facilities without an active facility acquired outbreak can move to visitation as outlined in the emergency rules (including those with isolation wings), but visitation is only allowed for residents who are NOT COVID positive and in areas away from COVID positive isolation areas.
- Reopening is optional for facilities; those that do not feel they have the resources to re-open safely will not be mandated to open or allow for essential caregivers.
- Residents in any facility (or their legal representative) will be able to designate up to two essential caregivers who will be trained by the facility on PPE use and infection control, and they must meet the testing requirement.
- Essential caregivers will then be allowed to visit the resident in-room, one at a time, by appointment, provided the resident is not COVID positive, using PPE, being screened, being escorted into and out of the resident's room. Multi-resident rooms will require adjustments to visits, and the facility must maintain all the requirements of its infection control plan and any mitigation plans that are in place.
- Facilities will need to outline in their visitation plans/policies the number of designated caregivers that can be in the facility at any given time.

- All activity related to implementation of and conducting visitation must be documented and recorded in accordance with the emergency rules to ensure compliance and health and safety.
- A facility can allow a barber or beautician to enter the facility to provide services to a resident if the barber or beautician passes the screening requirements, meets testing and other requirements as provided in rules, and complies with the most current version of the Minimum Standard Health Protocols – Checklist for Cosmetology Salons/Hair Salons, located on this website: <https://open.texas.gov/>.





