



Health Department: Nursing homes should limit most visitors to prevent potential spread of COVID-19

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SANTA FE – In order to minimize the danger of COVID-19 spread to high-risk communities, the state Department of Health on Saturday announced that it has ordered nursing homes to limit visitation to people whose loved ones are receiving end-of-life care.

The order also targets facilities providing assisted living, adult day care, hospice and rehabilitation for older adult patients. Facilities where older adults live or that provide services to them are strongly encouraged to implement the recommendations as is reasonably appropriate.

DOH further required that when those limited visitors are allowed in:

- They should have their temperatures taken as a condition of entry, and visitors with a temperature over 100 degrees Fahrenheit or signs of respiratory infection should be barred from entry and advised to seek medical attention;
- Upon entry, they should thoroughly wash hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based sanitizer if soap and water are not available;
- They should be escorted by facility staff to and from the patient's room;
- At no time should they be out of the room unescorted.

To help families stay connected to their loved ones, the Aging and Long-Term Services Department has nine cameras and by March 16 will have 350 tablets that families can use for electronic visits. The agency is exploring other ways to keep residents in touch with loved ones.

Following this order may cause regulated nursing facilities to be in non-compliance with certain state regulatory requirements. The state will not take enforcement action against any regulated nursing facility for implementing the order in good faith during the 30-day state of emergency that runs through April 9.

These resources are available for more information:

- For more information about nursing home visits or to request use of a camera-tablet link, call the Long Term Care Ombudsman (1-866-451-2901).
- For general health questions about COVID-19, or if you have concerns that you may have been exposed to the coronavirus, call the Health Department hotline: 1-855-600-3453. The hotline is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- COVID-19 updates also are available at the DOH website <http://cv.nmhealth.org/>

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Contact: Nora Meyers Sackett
Press Secretary, Office of the Governor
nora.sackett@state.nm.us
(505) 690-7313

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