

Long-Term Care Facility Compassionate Care and End of Life Visitation Guidance

Updated: March 5, 2021

This document encompasses both end of life care visits and compassionate care visits. New Mexico's positivity rate does not impact a facility's ability to provide compassionate care or end of life visitation. The frequency of visits is determined by the plan of care or service plan and the visits must follow the Core Principles of COVID-19 Infection Prevention as outlined in the Visitation Guidance Document. The capacity of a compassionate care visit should be determined by social distancing. The maximum allowable capacity of such a visit is the number of persons that can safely maintain a six-foot radius from others. Facilities may establish their own limits as they see fit.

The following guidance provides recommendations for facilities to consider when determining whether a compassionate care or end of life visit is appropriate.

What is a Compassionate Care Visit?

A Compassionate Care Visit refers to any one of the following scenarios:

- A resident whose condition is defined by any or all of the following:
 - When a resident is newly enrolled in a hospice program;
 - When a resident has a change in status to palliative care as determined by an order from the clinician;
 - When a resident is determined to be in the dying process [terminal within 30 days];
 - The emergence of a condition/disease in which a resident is declining in accordance with the care plan/service team and most recent assessment;
 - A resident, who was living with their family before recently being admitted to a nursing home, is struggling with the change in environment and lack of physical family support;
 - A resident who is grieving after a friend or family member recently passed away;
 - A resident who needs cueing and encouragement with eating or drinking, previously provided by family and/or caregiver(s), is experiencing weight loss or dehydration; or
 - A resident, who used to talk and interact with others, is experiencing emotional distress, seldom speaking, or crying more frequently (when the resident had rarely cried in the past).
- Failure to thrive manifested by functional parameters to include:
 - The emergence of unplanned weight loss problem;
 - The emergence of a new pressure injury, an unstageable pressure injury, a deep tissue injury, or a worsening in pressure injury status;
 - A fall that resulted in an injury or in which the resident was transferred to the hospital for evaluation;
 - A decrease in function as noted by a decline in Activities of Daily Living (ADL) or physical functioning; or

- The ability or capacity of a resident’s decision-making has worsened.

What is an End of Life Visit?

End of Life Visits refers to the following scenario:

- Visitation with a person who has a terminal condition or dementia-related disorder that has become advanced, progressive, and or incurable. The person is in the active stages of dying (probable within thirty days).

Visitation Area Criteria

The visitation area should be established as follows:

- Conducted outdoors if the health of the resident and weather allows:
 - If possible, the outdoor visitation area should be accessible for visitors from the outdoors;
 - Outdoor visitation should occur only on days when there are no weather warnings that would put either visitors or residents at risk;
 - Visitation spaces must provide adequate protection from weather elements (e.g., shaded from the sun);
 - Visitation areas must be sanitized after every visitor.
- If outdoor visitation is not feasible or is not advisable for the health of the resident, visitation should be conducted in a designated room inside of the facility.
 - If possible, the room should be located close to the entrance of the facility, so the visitor has the least amount of contact with the rest of the facility;
- If the resident cannot be moved from their room, a compassionate care or end of life visit can be held in the resident’s room.
 - It is preferred that residents receiving compassionate care or end of life visit have a private room. If this is not possible and the resident has a roommate, a partition should be in place between the living areas of the resident and their roommate. If the resident is in the room during the visit, they should also wear a face covering.

Resident Criteria

Before a visit takes place, the facility must document:

- Resident’s status related to the need for compassionate care or end of life visit;
- Other interventions employed to improve the resident’s status and the outcome;
- The need for a compassionate care visit to improve the resident’s status; and

The following criteria must be met for a visit:

- Residents must wear a face covering or mask if medically feasible; and
- Residents must practice appropriate hand hygiene before and after the visit.

Residents suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19, or those under required quarantine, may accept visitors under compassionate care or end of life circumstances. Anyone visiting a resident under these circumstances must wear appropriate PPE.

Facility Criteria

- The compassionate care visit must be scheduled in advance.
- Adequate staff must be present to facilitate the visitation, monitor visitation if necessary, and

sanitize visitation areas after each visit.

- Residents and visitors must not go through a COVID-positive or quarantined area to get to the visitation area.
- The facility must screen visitors for signs and symptoms of COVID. (See Visitor Criteria Section)
- Areas, where visitors and residents sit, must be sanitized between visitations using an approved antiviral disinfectant - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/reopen-guidance.html>
- There must be adequate PPE to permit residents, if they can comply, to wear a face-covering or mask during visitation.
- Facilities must provide alcohol-based hand sanitizer to visitors and demonstrate how to use it appropriately.
- Facilities may establish additional reasonable guidelines as needed to protect patient health and safety.

Visitor Criteria

- Visitors must sign-in the visitors log with complete name, address, and phone number.
- Visitors must pass visitor screening criteria pursuant to the most current CDC guidance:
 - Must not be COVID-19 positive or have signs or symptoms of COVID-19.
 - Must have their temperatures taken and logged at the facility entrance.
 - Must have no fever (body temperature above 100 degrees Fahrenheit) and no sign of a respiratory infection, including coughing or shortness of breath.
- Visitors must agree to be escorted to and from the visitation area and must agree not to leave the designated visitation area.
- Visitors must wear a face covering or mask during the entire visitation.
- Visitors must perform appropriate hand hygiene immediately before and after the visitation.
- Visitors must meet any other reasonable condition of visitation that the facility deems necessary to protect patient health and safety.
- Visitors must be 18 years of age and older.
- Those who cannot meet all the conditions of entry should not be permitted visitation.