

What you need to know about...

Compassionate Care Visits

During LTC Phases 1 and 2 of the **Safe Start for Long-Term Care** plan, a resident of long-term care may be visited indoors for compassionate care reasons, including end-of-life and psychosocial need situations.

What is a compassionate care visit?

Compassionate care visits are intended to permit limited indoor visitation and necessary support to residents facing serious health or emotional crises. These visits are only permitted in “end-of-life” or “psychosocial need” circumstances.

What are end-of-life circumstances?

End-of-life circumstances are generally marked by a “sharp decline in health status”, as defined by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). A health episode with a substantial probability of mortality should be considered to be an end-of-life circumstance.

What are psychosocial need situations?

Psychosocial need situations are defined by signs of emotional distress. Examples may include expressions of grief, crying, social withdrawal, weight loss or dehydration, or reluctance to eat or drink. Residents clearly struggling emotionally should be allowed visitors by these criteria.

May I hug or touch a resident during these visits?

In general, visitors may not initiate physical contact. Under compassionate care circumstances, however, physical contact may be permitted *IF* the facility permits and is consulted on a safe procedure for making contact for a limited amount of time.

Are compassionate care visits supervised?

Compassionate care circumstances do not necessarily need to be supervised, although facilities may enact their own compassionate care policies to ensure that these visits are conducted safely and in accordance with infection control guidelines.

How many visitors can participate in one of these visits?

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 strictly maintain a six-foot radius from others. Facilities may establish their own limits as they see fit.

What rules must I follow when visiting?

All visitors must be screened and wash their hands prior to entry. Visitors must be masked at all times and wear other PPE as directed. Visitors must strictly observe social distancing, maintaining at least six feet of distance from others. **Vaccinated visitors are not exempt from safety requirements.**

May I visit a resident in quarantine?

Residents suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19, or those under required quarantine, may accept visitors under compassionate care circumstances. The facility must be consulted for infection control guidance before such a visit occurs.

Where may compassionate care visits take place?

Compassionate care visits should generally take place in the designated visiting area of a facility. However, if the resident prefers or no such area is accessible, the visit may take place in the resident's room, so long as all roommates allow and infection control is observed.

Other Notes

Long-term care facilities must accommodate visits for compassionate care reasons.

Access to loved ones is important for resident wellbeing, especially under compassionate care circumstances.

All visitors to long-term care facilities must be screened and wash their hands prior to entry. Within the facility, visitors must wear PPE and maintain a six-foot distance from others at all times.

Facilities should restrict the number of visitors per resident and the number of visitors allowed into the building at a time. Facilities may consider scheduling visits for a fixed length of time.

Compassionate care visitors are afforded some flexibility compared to visitors under normal circumstances. Refer to the Q&A at left for more information.