



Deer Meadows

Retirement Community

November 18, 2021

RE: Visitation

Dear Family and Responsible Party,

This has been a long time coming and I am sure you have waited for this day as much as we have and your family or friend has – CMS in conjunction with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), has updated its visitation guidance accordingly, but emphasizing the importance of maintaining infection prevention practices.

As you already know, the visitation restrictions during the COVID-19 PHE were to mitigate the opportunity for visitors to introduce COVID-19 into the nursing home. While all residents have a right to visitation, fully open and unrestricted visitation posed a clinical health and safety risk to other residents during this PHE, and therefore, it was reasonable to place limits on visitation.

CMS will continue to monitor vaccination and infection rates, including the effects of COVID-19 variants on nursing home residents, which have recently caused the number of cases to slightly increase. However, at this time, **continued restrictions on this vital resident's right are no longer necessary.**

We acknowledge that there are still concerns associated with visitation, such as visitation with an unvaccinated resident while the nursing home's county COVID-19 level of community transmission¹ is substantial or high. However, adherence to the core principles of COVID-19 infection prevention mitigates these concerns. Furthermore, the resident has the right to make choices about aspects of his or her life in the facility that are significant to the resident. Residents may deny or withdraw consent for a visit at any time. Therefore, if a visitor, resident, or their representative is aware of the risks associated with visitation, and the visit occurs in a manner that does not place other residents at risk (e.g., in the resident's room), the resident must be allowed to receive visitors as he/she chooses.

Below are the Core Principles of COVID – 19 Infection Prevention that our facility follows and we expect all visitors to follow as well. Following these Principles will help keep everyone safe and enable you to continue to visit without placing staff or residents at risks.

- Visitors who have a positive viral test for COVID-19, symptoms of COVID-19, or currently meet the criteria for quarantine, should not and will not be permitted to enter the facility until they have waited out their quarantine. Our facility will continue to screen all who enter for these visitation exclusions.
 - Hand hygiene (use of alcohol-based hand rub is preferred)
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- Face covering or mask (covering mouth and nose)
- Physical distancing at least six feet between persons
- Instructional signage throughout the facility and proper visitor education on COVID19 signs and symptoms, infection control precautions, other applicable facility practices (e.g., use of face covering or mask, specified entries, exits and routes to designated areas, hand hygiene) are posted for instructional purposes
- Cleaning and disinfecting high-frequency touched surfaces in the facility often, and designated visitation areas after each visit will occur
- Appropriate staff will be wearing proper Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- Effective cohorting of residents (e.g., separate areas dedicated to COVID-19 care (Red, Yellow and Green Zones)
- Resident and staff testing will continue to be conducted as required based on CDC/CMS/State DOH/Local DOH requirements

These core principles are consistent with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance for nursing homes, and should be **adhered to at all times**. Additionally, visitation will be person-centered, considering the residents' physical, mental, and psychosocial well-being, and supportive of their quality of life. The risk of transmission can be further reduced through the use of physical barriers (e.g., clear Plexiglass dividers, curtains) in which you may see throughout the facility in appropriate places. Your visit should be conducted with an adequate degree of privacy. Visitors who are unable to adhere to the core principles of COVID-19 infection prevention will not be permitted to visit and will be asked to leave. By following a person-centered approach and adhering to these core principles, visitation can occur safely based on the below guidance.

Outdoor Visitation

While taking a person-centered approach and adhering to the core principles of COVID-19 infection prevention, outdoor visitation is preferred *when the resident and/or visitor are not fully vaccinated against COVID-19*. Outdoor visits generally pose a lower risk of transmission due to increased space and airflow. Therefore, visits should be held outdoors whenever practicable. However, weather considerations (e.g., inclement weather, excessively hot or cold temperatures, and poor air quality) or an individual resident's health status (e.g., medical condition(s), COVID-19 status) may hinder outdoor visits. For outdoor visits, there are accessible and safe outdoor spaces for visitation, such as in courtyards, patios, or parking lots, including the use of tents, if available. When conducting outdoor visitation, all appropriate infection control and prevention practices should be adhered to.

** Note: Fully vaccinated refers to a person who is ≥ 2 weeks following receipt of the second dose in a 2- dose series, or ≥ 2 weeks following receipt of one dose of a single-dose vaccine per the CDC recommended guidelines.*



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Indoor Visitation

Indoor visitation is now permitted at all times and for all residents as permitted under the regulations. The facility will no longer limit the frequency and length of visits for residents, the number of visitors, or require advance scheduling of visits.

Although there is no limit on the number of visitors that a resident can have at one time, all visits will be conducted in a manner that adheres to the core principles of COVID-19 infection prevention and does not increase risk to other residents. To the extent possible physical distancing can still be maintained during peak times of visitation (e.g., lunch time, after business hours, etc.). Please avoid large gatherings (e.g., parties, events) where large numbers of visitors are in the same space at the same time and physical distancing cannot be maintained. During indoor visitation your movement in the facility will be limited to who you are visiting. For example, visitors should not walk around different halls of the facility. Rather, you will be required to go directly to the resident's room or designated visitation area.

If a resident's roommate is unvaccinated or immunocompromised (regardless of vaccination status), you will not be able to visit in that room. There may be a situation where there is a roommate and the health status of the resident prevents leaving the room, we will make every attempt to enable in-room visitation while adhering to the core principles of infection prevention.

If the county COVID-19 community level of transmission is substantial and high, all residents and visitors, regardless of vaccination status, will be required to wear face coverings or masks and physically distance, at all times. In areas of low to moderate transmission, the safest practice is for residents and visitors to wear face coverings or masks and physically distance, particularly if either of them is at increased risk for severe disease or are unvaccinated. If the resident and all their visitor(s) are fully vaccinated and the resident is not moderately or severely immunocompromised, you may choose not to wear face coverings or masks and to have physical contact. However, you should wear face coverings or masks when around other residents or healthcare personnel, regardless of vaccination status.

While not recommended, residents who are on transmission-based precautions (TBP) or quarantine can still receive visitors. In these cases, visits should occur in the resident's room and the resident should wear a well-fitting facemask (if tolerated). Before visiting residents, who are on TBP or quarantine, visitors will be made aware of the potential risk of visiting and precautions necessary in order to visit the resident. Visitors should adhere to the core principles of infection prevention. The Facility will offer well-fitting facemasks or other appropriate PPE, if available; however, we are not required to provide PPE for visitors.

We acknowledge that there is no substitute for physical contact, such as the warm embrace between a resident and their loved one. Therefore, if the resident is fully vaccinated, they can choose to have close contact (including touch) with their visitor in accordance with the CDC's recommendations.



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Unvaccinated residents may also choose to have physical touch based on their preferences and needs, such as with support persons for individuals with disabilities and visitors participating in certain religious practices, including in end-of-life situations. In these situations, unvaccinated residents (or their representative) and their visitors shall be advised of the risks of physical

contact prior to the visit. Visitors should also physically distance from other residents and staff in the facility.

Indoor Visitation during an Outbreak Investigation

While it is safer for visitors not to enter the facility during an outbreak investigation, visitors will still be permitted to visit. You will be made aware of the potential risk of visiting during an outbreak investigation if you still wish to visit and the resident or their representative would like to have a visit during an outbreak investigation, you will need to wear a face coverings or masks during the visits, regardless of vaccination status, and the visit will ideally occur in the resident's room.

Visitor Testing and Vaccination

While we are not required to, in counties with substantial or high levels of community transmission we may offer testing to visitors, if feasible. Otherwise, you should be tested on their own before coming to the facility (e.g., within 2–3 days).

CMS is strongly encouraging all visitors to be vaccinated and the facility encourages you to be vaccinated as this can help prevent the spread of COVID-19. We are permitted to ask you about your vaccination status; however, **you are not required to be tested or vaccinated** (or show proof of such) as a condition of visitation. If you decline to disclose their vaccination status, you should wear a face covering or mask at all times.

I hope this information, although long, is helpful to you in pre-planning to visit with your family member or friend. To preschedule a visit please contact Jerry Lathrop JLathrop@Deer-Meadows.org or 2156247575 ext 1194

WARMLY,
Malcolm Back, NHA