An official website of the State of North Carolina How you know

NCDHHS

FRIDAY, MARCH 12, 2021 - 00:00

CMS Relaxes Guidance for Visitation in Long-Term Care Facilities; NCDHHS Rescinds LTCF Visitation Secretarial Order

The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services is updating its visitation guidance for long-term care facilities to allow for in-person, indoor or outdoor, visitation in most circumstances. The change aligns with new guidance released this week from the Centers of Medicare and Medicaid Services and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and reflects rapidly improving trends in long-term care facilities.

RALEIGH

The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services is updating its visitation guidance for long-term care facilities to allow for in-person, indoor or outdoor, visitation in most circumstances.

The change aligns with new guidance released this week from the Centers of Medicare and Medicaid Services and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and reflects rapidly improving trends (https://www.ncdhhs.gov/news/press-releases/covid-19-cases-declining-rapidly-north-carolina-long-term-care-settings) in long-term care facilities.

“This action shows that our vaccination efforts are already having benefits,” said NCDHHS Secretary Mandy K. Cohen, M.D. “I am grateful to all who have worked so hard to protect our most vulnerable residents and am so thankful that families and loved ones can be physically reunited.”

In addition to updating its guidance, the department is rescinding Secretarial Order 6: Visitation for Long-term Care Facilities. (https://covid19.ncdhhs.gov/media/2312/open)

While outdoor visitation is best when possible, indoor visitation is now allowed for all residents, regardless of vaccination status, except for a few circumstances when visitation should be limited due to a high risk of COVID-19 transmission in a particular facility. It is recommended that unvaccinated residents who wish to become vaccinated should not start indoor visitation until they have been fully vaccinated.

Additionally, new long-term care residents will not be required to quarantine if they are fully vaccinated and have not had close contact with someone with COVID-19 in the previous 14 days. Fully vaccinated and non-immunocompromised health care providers with higher risk exposures who are asymptomatic also do not need to be restricted from work.

In order to mitigate the risk of relaxing restrictions, vaccinating residents and staff in long-term care facilities and continued adherence to prevention measures, including the 3 Ws – wear, wait, wash – are still the safest approach to reducing the spread of COVID-19.

Expanding visitation has substantial benefits to residents and their visitors. In order to keep everyone safe, visitors and residents should continue to adhere to the 3 Ws, and visitors should still be screened and restricted from visiting if they have signs or symptoms of infection or have been in prolonged close contact with someone with COVID-19 in the prior 14 days.

The full guidance from CMS and the CDC can be found at:

- www.cms.gov/files/document/qso-20-39-nh-revised.pdf (https://www.cms.gov/files/document/qso-20-39-nh-revised.pdf)

This press release is related to: