STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

ROY COOPER
GOVERNOR

MANDY COHEN, MD, MPH
SECRETARY

SECRETARIAL ORDER No. 1
Visitation Restrictions for Nursing Homes

July 24, 2020

To prevent outbreaks of COVID-19 in nursing homes, federal authorities recommended restricting visitation. Ensuring the health and safety of residents has been challenging and required tremendous work on the part of facility management and frontline staff.

Nursing homes are at risk of experiencing outbreaks of COVID-19 and the residents of these facilities are often in a high-risk category for serious complications from COVID-19. As we continue to see outbreaks in our nursing homes, we must maintain our vigilance and continue to restrict visitation to compassionate care situations. The continued use of technology to keep families connected as much as possible is still highly encouraged.

Based upon the foregoing and pursuant to the authority delegated to me by Governor Cooper in Executive Order No. 152, I find that the following restrictions for certain long term care facilities are required to slow the spread of COVID-19 and save lives and therefore order the following:

This Order applies to nursing homes or skilled nursing facilities, including combination skilled nursing/adult care assisted living facilities. Separate guidance is available for other larger residential care facilities including adult care homes, behavioral health/IDD, intermediate care facilities, and psychiatric residential treatment facilities (PRTF) with 7 or more beds, available here. (Facilities with 6 or fewer beds should refer to "Guidance for Smaller Residential Settings Regarding Visitation, Communal Dining, Group and Outside Activities" available here).

Section I. Restrictions on Visitation.
Nursing Homes or skilled nursing facilities, including combination skilled nursing/adult care assisted living facilities shall restrict visitation of all visitors and non-essential health care personnel, except for certain compassionate care situations, including end-of-life situations. These facilities shall also cancel communal dining and all group activities, including internal and external activities.

Section II. Distribution.
This Secretarial Order shall be: (l) distributed to the news media and other organizations calculated to bring its contents to the attention of the general public; and (2) distributed to others as necessary to ensure proper implementation of this Secretarial Order.

Section III. Effective Date.
This Secretarial Order is effective immediately. This Secretarial Order shall remain in effect for sixty (60) days unless rescinded or replaced with a superseding Secretarial Order. An Executive Order rescinding the Declaration of the State of Emergency will automatically rescind this Secretarial Order.

Signed this the 24th day of July 2020.

Mandy K. Cohen, MD, MPH
Secretary