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Arkansas Health Care Association Announces Stringent Visitor Limitations

Facilities implementing additional measures to protect residents

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (March 14, 2020) - In compliance with Federal and Arkansas Department of Health revised guidelines, Arkansas long-term care facilities announced mandatory visitor guidelines for all locations in an effort to limit the spread of COVID-19. The new requirements prohibit visitors for thirty (30) days unless the visit is medically necessary, or another limited exception applies.

AHCA is following the revised guidelines as issued in a press release on March 13, 2020, by the Arkansas Department of Health:

Due to the vulnerability of residents in long-term care facilities, it is of utmost importance to limit possible exposure to COVID-19. A long-term care facility is defined by section 20-10- 101(10) of the Arkansas Code and includes nursing homes, residential care facilities, assisted living facilities, post-acute head injury retraining and residential care facilities, and any other facility that provides long-term medical or personal care. Effective immediately, the Arkansas Department of Health directs all long-term care facilities to prohibit all visitation for thirty (30) days unless medically necessary or by law enforcement or other emergency personnel, a representative from the Arkansas Department of Health, a representative from the Arkansas Department of Human Services Office of Long-term Care, or a representative from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. This prohibition shall begin on March 13, 2020, and end on April 12, 2020. Visitation may resume on April 13, 2020, unless extended by a separate directive from the Arkansas Department of Health.

All visitation that is allowed by this directive is subject to the screening requirements below unless otherwise provided in a separate directive from the Arkansas Department of Health. Medically necessary visits include visitation related to medical treatment and visitation appropriate for a resident's end of life care.



While visitation is prohibited, all long-term care facilities shall offer alternative means of communication for people who would otherwise visit, including through virtual communication such as phone and video communication. Other visitation required by 42 CFR § 483.10(f)(4)(i) that is not provided for above shall be by alternative means of communication in lieu of in person visitation.

All facilities have been briefed on the updated guidelines and will implement the mandatory procedures immediately. Family members are encouraged to arrange alternative ways to contact their loved ones and should reach out directly to their specific facility to make alternate communications plans.

“The safety of our residents is our top priority. The AHCA and its members are following all directives from state and federal authorities to minimize the risk of COVID-19 exposure in our facilities,” said Rachel Bunch, AHCA executive director. “Experts have provided guidance that this is best accomplished by strictly limiting the number of people entering nursing homes or assisted living communities. All people who are not essential to meeting the resident’s needs or ensure continued operations will be asked not to enter. While we understand these visitor restrictions may be difficult for residents and families, it is a critical and temporary measure for their protection.”

These additional measures were implemented in response to Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) [newest recommendations from CDC](#) in conjunction with the announcement from the Trump Administration Friday, citing their commitment to safeguard the lives and health of the American people.

You can find the full CMS press release [here](#).

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