

# Compassionate Care and End of Life Visitation Guidance

This document encompasses both end of life care visits and compassionate care visits. New Mexico's positivity rate does not impact a facility's ability to provide compassionate care or end of life visitation.

End of Life Visits: are one-time, with one visitor at a time, and allowed on a limited basis as an exception to visitor restrictions.

Compassionate Care Visits: are one-time, with one visitor, and allowed on a limited basis as an exception to visitor restrictions.

## What is a Compassionate Care Visit?

A Compassionate Care Visit refers to any one of the following scenarios:

- A resident whose condition is defined by any or all of the following:
  - When a resident is newly enrolled in a hospice program;
  - When a resident has a change in status to palliative care as determined by an order from the clinician;
  - When a resident is determined to be in the dying process [terminal within 30 days]; or
  - The emergence of a condition/disease in which a resident is declining in accordance with the care plan/service team and most recent assessment.
- Failure to thrive manifested by functional parameters to include:
  - The emergence of unplanned weight loss problem;
  - The emergence of a new pressure injury, an unstageable pressure injury, a deep tissue injury, or a worsening in pressure injury status;
  - A fall that resulted in an injury or in which the resident was transferred to the hospital for evaluation;
  - A decrease in function as noted by a decline in Activities of Daily Living (ADL) or physical functioning; or
  - The ability or capacity of a resident's decision-making has worsened.

## What is an End of Life Visit?

End of Life Visits refers to the following scenario:

- Visitation with a person who has a terminal condition or dementia-related disorder that has become advanced, progressive, and or incurable. The person is in the active stages of dying (probable within thirty days).

## Visitation Area Criteria

The visitation area should be established as follows:

- Conducted outdoors if the health of the resident and weather allows:
  - If possible, the outdoor visitation area should be accessible for visitors from the outdoors;
  - Outdoor visitation should occur only on days when there are no weather warnings that would put either visitors or residents at risk;

- Visitation spaces must provide adequate protection from weather elements (e.g., shaded from the sun);
- Visitation areas must be sanitized after every visitor.
- If outdoor visitation is not feasible or is not advisable for the health of the resident, visitation should be conducted in a designated room inside of the facility.
  - If possible, the room should be located close to the entrance of the facility, so the visitor has the least amount of contact with the rest of the facility;
- If the resident cannot be moved from their room, a compassionate care or end of life visit can be held in the resident's room.
  - It is preferred that residents receiving compassionate care or end of life visit have a private room. If this is not possible and the resident has a roommate, a partition should be in place between the living areas of the resident and their roommate. If the resident is in the room during the visit, they should also wear a face covering.

### Resident Criteria

Before a visit takes place, the facility must document:

- Resident's status related to the need for compassionate care or end of life visit;
- Other interventions employed to improve the resident's status and the outcome;
- The need for a compassionate care visit to improve the resident's status; and
- A physician or designate's order for the compassionate care visit.

The following criteria must be met for a visit:

- The resident has never been COVID-19 positive; or
- The resident was COVID-19 positive, but no longer requires transmission-based precautions as outlined by the CDC;
- Residents must wear a face covering or mask if medically feasible; and
- Residents must practice appropriate hand hygiene before and after the visit.

### Facility Criteria

- The compassionate care visit must be scheduled in advance.
- Adequate staff must be present to facilitate the visitation, monitor visitation if necessary, and sanitize visitation areas after each visit.
- Residents and visitors must not go through a COVID-positive or quarantined area to get to the visitation area.
- The facility must screen visitors for signs and symptoms of COVID. (See Visitor Criteria Section)
- Areas, where visitors and residents sit, must be sanitized between visitations using an approved antiviral disinfectant - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/reopen-guidance.html>
- There must be adequate PPE to permit residents, if they can comply, to wear a face-covering or mask during visitation.
- Facilities must provide alcohol-based hand sanitizer to visitors and demonstrate how to use it appropriately.
- Facilities may establish additional reasonable guidelines as needed to protect patient health and safety.

### Visitor Criteria

- Visitors must sign-in the visitors log with complete name, address, and phone number.

- Visitors must pass visitor screening criteria:
  - Must not be COVID-19 positive or have signs or symptoms of COVID-19.
  - If a visitor has had COVID-19, they must provide documentation (e.g., doctor's note) that they no longer meet CDC criteria for transmission-based precautions.
  - Must have their temperatures taken and logged at the facility entrance.
  - Must have no fever (body temperature above 100 degrees Fahrenheit) and no sign of a respiratory infection, including coughing or shortness of breath.
- Visitors must agree to be escorted to and from the visitation area and must agree not to leave the designated visitation area.
- Visitors must wear a face covering or mask during the entire visitation.
- Visitors must perform appropriate hand hygiene immediately before and after the visitation.
- Visitors must meet any other reasonable condition of visitation that the facility deems necessary to protect patient health and safety.
- Visitors must be 18 years of age and older.
- Visitors during and end of life visit must enter individually one at a time.
- Those who cannot meet all the conditions of entry will not be permitted visitation.