



# Indiana State Department of Health COVID 19: Family Visitation for End of Life Situations

## BACKGROUND

On March 14, in accord with CMS recommendations, Indiana released its guidelines on restricting all visitors and non-essential personnel from long-term care facilities. The only exception for visitors is for compassionate care situations, as in end of life. We are adding further clarifications to this guidance around family visitation for end-of life care.

## FAMILY MEMBERS MAY BE ALLOWED TO VISIT UNDER THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS

Indiana supports families being allowed to visit long-term care facilities during an end-of-life situation with a loved one, even loved ones with COVID-19. Because of the unique nature of the coronavirus these decisions about should be made on a case-by-case basis and should weigh the risk of viral transmission with the need for compassionate end-of-life care.

The following should be considered before allowing families to visit:

- Resident is thought, based on the clinical impression, to be at imminent risk dying with a goal of allowing family member the opportunity to have a quality interaction with the resident
- The number of family members should be limited to no more than two
- Family members must be carefully screened at entry for fever and respiratory symptoms
- Family members who are in a high-risk category should be cautioned about the decision to visit a healthcare setting
- Those with respiratory symptoms (e.g., fever, cough, shortness of breath) should not be permitted to enter the facility at any time (even in end-of-life situations)

Family members who are permitted visitation will be:

- Instructed before entry to the facility of the need to be screened for temperature and symptoms
- Instructed of their risks of contracting COVID-19
- Limited to a specific location (the resident's room or other designated location); and
- Required to perform hand hygiene and wear personal protective equipment (PPE) including gloves, gown, and a standard surgical facemask, if available.

In addition, facilities are asked to family members who enter the facility to monitor for signs and symptoms of respiratory infection for at least 14 days after leaving the facility. If symptoms occur, the visitor should self-isolate at home, contact a healthcare provider and immediately notify the facility of the date and person visited.

Facilities can also set specific policies in terms of length of visits, times the visits can occur, and age limitation (e.g., persons <14 years of age or persons based on cognitive function who may not be able to wear appropriate PPE).

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

General questions from the public or healthcare provider inquiries about COVID-19 may be directed to the ISDH COVID-19 Call Center at the toll-free number 877-826-0011 (available 8 a.m. to midnight).

- CDC COVID-19 webpage: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/>
- ISDH COVID-19 webpage: <https://coronavirus.in.gov>