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DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH ANNOUNCES NEW COVID-19 GUIDELINES FOR VISITATION AT LONG- TERM CARE FACILITIES IN RESPONSE TO FEDERAL DIRECTIVE

INDOOR VISITATION NOW PERMITTED UNDER CERTAIN CONDITIONS, NURSING HOMES MUST MAKE VISITATION PLANS

(HARTFORD, CT) – Governor Ned Lamont today announced that, following [a newly issued directive from the federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services \(CMS\)](#), Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) Acting Commissioner Deidre S. Gifford MD MPH has signed an order rescinding previously issued orders limiting visitation at long-term care facilities, including nursing homes. These orders were issued to protect the health of nursing home residents in response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. DPH has issued new COVID-19 guidelines for visitation and today’s action means that long-term care facilities in Connecticut are permitted to resume indoor visitation effective immediately, provided that certain conditions are met (a full list of those conditions follows below). [The DPH commissioner’s new order can be found online.](#)

“Making the decision to limit in-person visits at nursing homes is one of the hardest things I’ve had to do as governor, but amid the outbreak of this pandemic that is impacting the lives of so many people in our senior population, I knew it was the right thing to do,” **Governor Lamont said.** “Each facility is strongly urged to develop a visitation plan and strictly adhere to it to the greatest extent possible so that we can keep this virus from spreading and impacting our most vulnerable patients.”

“With this new guidance from the federal government, indoor visitation is now allowed in nursing homes under specific conditions,” **said Acting DPH Commissioner Deidre S. Gifford, MD MPH.** “I urge nursing homes to work closely with family members to arrange for the type of visitation that is most appropriate for each resident’s physical, mental and psychosocial well-being. There will be protocols in place to make sure the visitation is as safe as possible, including personal protective equipment to limit the spread of COVID-19 among our most vulnerable population.”

Nursing homes may open for indoor visitation under certain conditions, including that there has been no new onset of COVID-19 cases in the last 14 days and the facility is not currently conducting outbreak testing. Indoor visitation will be suspended if there is a positive COVID case among staff or residents. In addition, facilities and visitors must adhere to the Core Principles of Infection Control:

- Screening for all who enter the facility;
- Hand hygiene recommendations;
- Personal protection equipment as applicable;
- Social distancing requirements;
- Instructional signage throughout the facility;
- Cleaning and disinfecting high frequency touched surfaces in the facility;
- Effective cohorting of residents as applicable;
- Visitors should be able to adhere to the core principles and staff should provide monitoring for those who may have difficulty adhering to core principles;
- Facilities should limit the number of visitors per patient at one time and limit the total number of visitors in the facility one at a time (based on the size of the building and physical space). Facilities should consider scheduling visits for a specified length of time to help ensure all patients are able to receive visitors; and
- Facilities should limit movement in the facility. For example, visitors should not walk around different halls of the facility. Rather, they should go directly to the patient's room or designated visitation area.

The new visitation requirements also expand entry for health care workers and providers of other services whose access may have been previously restricted, such as social workers, clergy, hairdressers, and volunteers, as long as such individuals are not otherwise excluded from working due to an exposure to COVID-19 and comply with the Core Principles of Infection Control.

DPH also urges each chronic disease hospitals in the state not covered in the CMS guidance to develop a visitation plan for patients that includes the same core principles as long-term care facilities to prevent the spread of COVID-19. All in-person visits should be planned with the chronic disease hospital in collaboration with the patient's family or conservator with guidelines for infection control and safety as part of the chronic disease hospital's visitation policy.