



March 20, 2023

Dear BaneCare Families,

As spring approaches, The Department of Public Health has released updated guidance for those living in, visiting, and working in nursing homes. Please note the following updates:

### **General Standards for In-Person Visitation**

A long-term care facility must allow in-person visitation, which can occur in designated indoor or outdoor visitation space or the resident's room, with the following safety, care, and infection control measures and policies in place:

- Long-term care facilities should screen all individuals entering the facility for symptoms but may utilize posted signage as a means to do so. Facilities should encourage all individuals entering the facility to self-assess for symptoms of COVID-19 (e.g., cough, shortness of breath, or sore throat, myalgia, chills, or new onset loss of smell or taste and a fever). Self-screening should also include absence of a diagnosis of SARS-CoV-2 infection in the prior 10 days. Long-term care facilities should post signage at facility entrance(s) explaining self-screening to visitors.
  - Any visitor who has a positive self-screen with symptoms of COVID-19 infection or a diagnosis of SARS-CoV2 infection in the prior 10 days (regardless of the visitor's vaccination status) will not be permitted to visit with a resident.
- Visitors, regardless of vaccination status, must wear masks and physically distance themselves from other residents and staff when in a communal area in the facility. While visitors should wear masks when visiting residents in a private setting, such as a resident's room when the roommate is not present, they may choose not to. Also, while not recommended, if a resident (or responsible party) is aware of the risks of close contact and/or not wearing a mask during a visit, and they choose to not wear a mask and choose to engage in close contact, the facility cannot deny the resident their right to choose, as long as the residents' choice does not put other residents at risk. Regardless, masks must be worn by visitors in a communal area.
- While not recommended, residents who are in isolation can still receive visitors. In these cases, visits should only occur in the resident's room and the resident must wear a well-fitting facemask (if tolerated). Before visiting residents who are in isolation, visitors should be made aware of the potential risk of visiting and precautions necessary in order to visit the resident. Visitors should adhere to the core principles of infection prevention. It is strongly advised that visitors to COVID-19 positive residents should be up to date with COVID-19 vaccines and maintain physical distance. Facilities must offer and visitors must wear well-fitting facemasks and monitor visitor compliance with hand hygiene.

Any individual who enters the long-term care facility and develops signs and symptoms of COVID-19 such as fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, runny nose, headache, myalgia, chills, fatigue, gastrointestinal symptoms or new onset loss of smell or taste or tests positive for SARS-CoV2 infection within two days after exiting the long-term care facility or designated outdoor space must immediately notify the long-term care facility of the date they were in the facility, the individuals they were in

contact with, and the locations within the facility they visited. Long-term care facilities should immediately screen the individuals who had contact with the visitor for the level of exposure and follow up with the facility's medical director or resident's care provider.

### **Indoor Visitation During Outbreak Investigation**

While it is safer for visitors not to enter the facility during an outbreak investigation, visitors must still be allowed in the facility. Visitors should be made aware of the potential risk of visiting when there have been cases in the last 14 days in the facility and adhere to the core principles of infection prevention. If residents or their representative would like to have a visit while the resident is part of an exposure or outbreak investigation, they should wear face masks during visits, regardless of vaccination status, and visits should ideally occur in the resident's room.

While residents have the right to receive visitors at all times and make choices about aspects of their life in the facility that are significant to them, there may be times when the scope and severity of an outbreak warrants DPH to advise the facility pause visitation for a brief period of time. In accordance with CMS, DPH expects these situations to be extremely rare and only occur after the facility has worked with DPH to manage and prevent escalation of the outbreak. DPH, in accordance with CMS, also expects that if the outbreak is severe<sup>[1]</sup> enough to warrant pausing visitation, it would also warrant a pause on the facility accepting new admissions. For example, in a nursing home where, despite collaborating with DPH epidemiologists over several days, there continues to be uncontrolled transmission impacting a large number of residents (e.g., more than 30% of residents are suspected or confirmed to be infected with COVID-19), the facility may pause visitation and new admissions temporarily but for not more than 72 hours. In this situation, the nursing home would not be out of compliance with DPH and CMS requirements. A pause in visitation due to a severe outbreak would not apply to compassionate care visits.

### **Resident Room Visitation Space**

In addition to the conditions described above, the long-term care facility should allow residents to visit with loved ones in their rooms.

### **Outdoor Visitation Space**

In addition to the in-person indoor visitation conditions described above, the long-term care facility should continue to offer outdoor visitation and adhere to the following:

- Ensure visits with a resident occur in a designated outdoor space; outdoor visits will be dependent on permissible weather conditions, availability of outdoor space, and the health and well-being of the resident.
- A long-term care facility staff member trained in such patient safety and infection control measures must remain immediately available to the resident at all times during the visit.
- Residents may visit with loved ones without maintaining social distancing or wearing masks.

### **Compassionate Care Visitation**

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<sup>[1]</sup> Neither DPH nor CMS have a specific threshold for what constitutes a severe outbreak, and this could vary based on facility size or structure. However, any visitation limits should be rare and applied when there are many cases in multiple areas of the facility.

Compassionate care visits are allowed at all times. Facilities must accommodate compassionate care visits for residents, regardless of vaccination and outbreak status.

For compassionate care situations long-term care facilities must limit visitors in the facility to a specific room: either the resident's room, or another location designated by the facility. Long-term care facilities must require visitors to perform hand hygiene and provide visitors a facemask. Decisions about visitation during a compassionate care situation should be made on a case-by-case basis.

The safety of our patients, residents and staff remains our highest priority. Thank you for your patience and continued support as we focus on the health and well-being of your loved ones. As always, we will continue to provide you updates on our website at [www.banecare.com/covid-19](http://www.banecare.com/covid-19). If you have any trouble accessing our website, please let us know.

Sincerely,

*BaneCare Executive Directors*