



## MISSISSIPPI STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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### GUIDELINES FOR VISITATION AT INTERMEDIATE CARE FACILITIES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES

*Revised 10/1/2020*

Following the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH) and Department of Mental Health (DMH) recommendations, people can visit loved ones in Intermediate Care Facilities for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities (ICF/IIDs) when the following conditions are met:

- the [Core Principals of COVID-19 Infection Prevention](#) can be met.
- the COVID-19 county positivity rate, found on the [COVID-19 Nursing Home Data](#) site is used to determine how to facilitate indoor visitation:
  - Low (<5%) = Visitation should occur according to the core principles of COVID19 infection prevention and **facility policies** (beyond compassionate care visits)
  - Medium (5% – 10%) = Visitation should occur according to the core principles of COVID-19 infection prevention and **facility policies** (beyond compassionate care visits)
  - High (>10%) = Visitation should only occur for [compassionate care situations](#) according to the core principles of COVID-19 infection prevention and **facility policies**
- no new onset of COVID-19 cases in the last 14 days;
- the location is not experiencing staff shortages;
- adequate supplies of personal protective equipment (PPE) and essential cleaning and disinfection supplies are available;
- adequate testing for COVID-19 is available; and
- referral hospital(s) have bed capacity on wards and intensive care units.

**Note:** Indoor visitation may be restricted if any of the above conditions are not met.

DMH ICF/IIDs will continue to follow CMS and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidance for preventing the transmission of COVID-19. The following guidelines have been developed to reopen ICF/IIDs in a safe manner while mitigating the risk of possible outbreak or resurgence.

## **Guidelines for Indoor Visitation**

1. External groups visits (i.e., singers, entertainment) should be limited if possible and activities should be conducted outdoors at this time.
2. Social services or designated staff will notify families by telephone and/or letter regarding the visitation guidelines that are to be followed. Visitors will be required to sign an agreement in advance stating that they will follow all guidelines for visitation.
3. All visits must be scheduled in advance to ensure that the designated visitation area and staff are available for monitoring.
4. Signs will be posted at the entrance with instructions for visitors to be screened before entering the facility.
5. All visitors will have their temperature taken and be screened for COVID-19 symptoms. Anyone with a fever equal to or greater than 100.0°F, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, myalgia, chills or new onset of loss of taste or smell will not be allowed to visit a person. If a visitor has fever and/or any COVID-19 symptoms or exposure to a known COVID-19 case, he/she will be asked to reschedule the visit.
6. Each visitor will be required to perform handwashing and/or use hand sanitizer. If hand sanitizer is used, the CDC recommends using Alcohol-Based Hand Rub (ABHR) with greater than **60% ethanol or 70% isopropanol**.
7. Visits should be limited to one (1) hour or less.
8. Visitors must wear a cloth face covering or facemask for the duration of their visit. The person being visited should wear a mask as tolerated. Visitors should be responsible for bringing their own face mask/cloth face covering.
9. It is recommended that social distancing of at least six feet be practiced.
10. Visitors should be monitored by staff during the visit.
11. The visitation room will be disinfected after each visitation.
12. Buildings that are on quarantine or isolation may not receive visitors. Those buildings that have recovered may.
13. Any visitor who develops symptoms consistent with COVID-19 within 72 hours of a visit must notify the facility within 24 hours.
14. Violation of these guidelines by the visitor may result in revocation of visitation rights.
15. According to the CDC, all healthcare workers and first responders are considered essential personnel; therefore, hospice, home health, therapists, nurses and dieticians may enter the facility if they are screened and follow infection control procedures.

## **Guidelines for Outdoor Visitation**

Visitation is recognized as an important part of an individual's health and well-being. It is known that congregate settings provide opportunities for increased risk for the spread of COVID-19. However, recent data show that the risks of virus transmission are lower in outdoor settings. Facilities should establish visitor areas that are protected from weather elements, such as porches, patios and other covered areas, or have a space large enough to house a temporary tent. Outdoor visitation may occur regardless of a facility's outbreak status provided the following conditions are met.

1. The facility must monitor the temperature in any outdoor visitation area.
2. Visits should occur only on days when there are no weather warnings that would put their visitors or persons at risk.

3. Adequate staff must be present to allow for personnel to help with outdoor transition of persons, monitoring of visitation, and cleaning and sanitizing areas after each visit.
4. Visitation areas must be cleaned and sanitized between visitations using an approved antiviral disinfectant. The visitation schedule must provide sufficient time in between visits for this process.
5. Visitors must participate in and pass the facility's screening process prior to each visit.
6. The facility screening process must include a screening questionnaire, which will record the identity of the resident visited, date, name, address and phone number of the visitor and the facility must maintain these records so that they can be made available upon request by the Mississippi State Department of Health Bureau of Health Facilities Licensure and Certification or Office of Epidemiology.
7. The questionnaire will also include a declaration regarding signs and symptoms of infection, contact and/or exposure to known COVID-19 positive persons, and any prior testing for COVID-19, and a statement that the visitor will inform the facility immediately if they develop symptoms within 72 hours of visiting or test positive for COVID-19 after visiting.
8. Visitors must not have signs or symptoms of COVID-19 for at least three (3) days prior to a visit.
9. If any visitor previously tested positive for COVID-19, they must not visit within 14 days of a positive test.
10. Residents must wear a cloth face covering during the visit, if able, and all visitors must always adhere to physical distancing (at least 6 feet apart) during visits.
11. Residents must have the ability to safely transition from their room to an outdoor visitation location.
12. Facilities should consider limitations to the number of visitors a person may have at a time to minimize the number of people to which a person is exposed.
13. Visitors must stay in designated outdoor visitation locations.
14. Visitation should be restricted to children 12 years of age or older. Visitors with children must be able to manage them, and children must be able to wear a face mask during the entire visitation. Special family circumstances warranting children under the age of 12 to visit can be approved by the facility.
15. Outdoor visitations should be rotated, and visitors must **schedule** visits in advance with the facility pursuant to the facility's scheduling process and available times.
16. Facilities should rotate and schedule visits at specific times such that the total number of visitors present at any one time does not exceed safe limits.
17. Visitation will only be allowed during select hours of each day as defined by the facility.
18. Visitation hours and limits should be determined by the facility's availability of outdoor space and the ability of staff to monitor for infection control measures.
19. The facility must **ensure** that hand sanitizer and extra facemasks are available.
20. Visitors must sanitize hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or by handwashing with soap and water when entering and exiting.
21. Visitors cannot eat during the visit but may provide food and beverage to the resident consistent with dietary considerations if approved by the facility.
22. The facility must monitor all visits carefully to ensure that masks are worn, and visitation policies are followed.

If the facility cannot provide the necessary supervision of outdoor visits to prevent breaches in infection control requirements, then the facility must suspend outdoor visitation.

### **Guidelines for Home Visitations/Passes**

Following CMS recommendations, people can receive a home visitation pass from DMH ICF/IIDs as long as the facility is not currently in active outbreak status (no new cases for in the last 14 days past most recent onset of illness).

1. Passes for home visits must be requested via social services.
2. The person must have access to a mask and hand sanitizer provided by the facility or the family prior to pass issuance.
3. The family and person will be informed about potential risks when going into the community, including the risk of exposure to COVID-19 and the increased risk of introducing COVID-19 to the facility upon return. The facility should refer families to the COVID-19 county positivity rate found on the [COVID-19 Nursing Home Data](#) page to determine the rate in their county of residence and take the necessary precautions.
4. The person must be screened for COVID-19 symptoms prior to leaving the facility.
5. Families must sign a copy of and abide by home visit guidelines before a person's pass is approved.
6. Families picking up the person must have their temperature taken and be screened for COVID-19 symptoms. Anyone with a fever equal to or greater than 100.0°F, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, myalgia, chills or new onset of loss of taste or smell will be discouraged from taking the person. If the family decides to proceed with the home visit, the family must provide proof of a negative COVID-19 test result before the person can be returned to the facility.
7. When family arrives, they must remain in their vehicle and call the number provided by the social worker to notify of their arrival. The facility staff will bring the person to the family.
8. Family members and persons must follow universal masking and social distancing while in the community.
9. Request that the individual(s) joining the person in the community always wear a mask while with the person.
10. Family members and persons must follow good hand hygiene procedures, including frequent use of alcohol-based hand sanitizer when soap and water is not available.
11. Family members should consider keeping a log of the person's activities in the community to allow for contact tracing purposes if any community outbreaks occur in businesses or places the person visited.
12. Upon return to the facility, the family's temperature must be taken.
13. Families must remain in their vehicle and call the unit to notify of their arrival. Staff will come and get the person.
14. The person shall be screened for COVID-19 symptoms prior to returning to their unit.
15. The facility will continue to conduct daily symptom screenings with person upon return to the facility.

16. Returning persons should practice social distancing as much as possible when out of their room in the facility for 14 days after their return.
17. As tolerated, returning persons should follow universal masking when outside of their room.
18. Cohorting of persons who come and go from the facility is recommended.

### **CDC and CMS Resources:**

#### **Cleaning and Disinfecting:**

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/disinfecting-your-home.html>

#### **List N: Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19):**

<https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2-covid-19>

#### **Precautions for Household Members and Caregivers:**

[https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/index.html?CDC\\_AA\\_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fhcp%2Fguidance-prevent-spread.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/index.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fhcp%2Fguidance-prevent-spread.html)

#### **Handwashing:**

<https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/when-how-handwashing.html>

#### **Hand Sanitizer Use:**

<https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/hand-sanitizer-use.html>

#### **Guidance for Group Home for Individuals with Disabilities:**

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/group-homes.html>

#### **Guidance for Shared or Congregate Housing:**

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/shared-congregate-house/guidance-shared-congregate-housing.html>

#### **Preparing for COVID-19 in Nursing Homes/Long-term Care Facilities:**

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/long-term-care.html>

#### **Nursing Home Reopening Recommendations:**

<https://www.cms.gov/files/document/qso-20-39-nh.pdf>

#### **CMS COVID-19 Data Page**

<https://data.cms.gov/stories/s/COVID-19-Nursing-Home-Data/bkwz-xpvg>

#### **People Who are at Higher Risk for Severe Illness:**

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-at-higher-risk.html>

#### **People with Disabilities:**

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-with-disabilities.html>

### **MS State Department of Health Resources:**

#### **Healthcare Professionals and State Agencies:**

[https://msdh.ms.gov/msdhsite/\\_static/14,0,420,694.html](https://msdh.ms.gov/msdhsite/_static/14,0,420,694.html)

[https://msdh.ms.gov/msdhsite/\\_static/resources/8653.pdf](https://msdh.ms.gov/msdhsite/_static/resources/8653.pdf)