

# Frequently Asked Questions - COVID-19 (Coronavirus)

Reviewed: 05/18/2021

Updates to questions are marked with **\*\*\***, and changes to responses are in **bold** type.

Please consult the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC - [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)) and the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS - [www.cms.gov](http://www.cms.gov)) for current information on this evolving situation or additional questions beyond this document.

**CURRENT RESTRICTION STATUS:** At this time, visitors are permitted to enter the center depending upon a myriad of factors, including the two-week COVID-19 county positivity rate, COVID-19 cases in the center, vaccination status of residents, and other clinical safety factors. Because of this interdependency, some of these visitation options are subject to change. Compassionate care visits and end of life visits will continue. Any permitted visitors will be screened and subject to additional protocol, including confining visitation to the resident room only.

## COVID-19 (CORONAVIRUS) - GENERAL INFORMATION

- **\*\*\*When can I visit my loved one at the center?**

CMS issued a revised memo ([QSO-20-39-NH](#)) on **April 27, 2021** outlining a revised approach to nursing home visitation. Visitors are permitted at all Villa centers, except for a few circumstances:

- Unvaccinated residents: if the nursing home's COVID-19 county positivity rate is >10% AND <70% of residents in the facility are fully vaccinated, visitors should be prohibited for unvaccinated residents
- Residents with confirmed COVID-19 infection: whether vaccinated or unvaccinated, visitors should be prohibited for residents with confirmed COVID-19 infection until they have met the criteria to discontinue Transmission-Based Precautions
- Residents in quarantine: whether vaccinated or unvaccinated, visitors should be prohibited for residents in quarantine until they have met criteria for release from quarantine

In the event a center experiences an outbreak (defined as one in-house COVID-19 transmission), the center will follow CMS guidance along with state and local health department guidance, which may differ from what is listed here.

All Visitors will be screened prior to admission and required to follow core principles of COVID-19 infection prevention including but not limited to wearing facemasks at all time while in the center, frequent hand hygiene, and social distancing of at least six (6) feet.

All Villa centers will follow their state health department guidelines, as well as CMS guidelines. Each center has a different layout requiring a site-specific approach to outdoor and indoor visits. Additionally, the safety of residents and staff will be considered in determining the centers potential for these visits. Please contact the center directly to learn more about their plan for visits and if possible, to schedule.

As always, there is no restriction to phone calls and if you have already established a way to communicate with your loved one in the center using cell phones or the center phones, please continue to call and stay connected. Additionally, please visit [www.villahc.com](http://www.villahc.com) to schedule a Villa Video Visit.



- **What measures does the center have in place to minimize the potential impact of the COVID-19?**

Based on the latest direction from the CDC, CMS, and the state Health Department, the center will update its staff, residents, visitors, vendors, and others regarding its current practice for any restriction to access the facility through this notice. Individuals are also encouraged to call the center to verify whether any current restrictions are in place in advance of traveling to the center.

The center is actively screening all visitors and admittees who enter. For any individuals permitted to enter, center staff will take and document the temperatures of all persons. Anyone with a fever will be denied access, and anyone who develops a fever at any time during their time in the center will be asked to leave. As of 4/2/2020, CMS requires everyone entering a long-term care facility to wear a face mask while in the center. Additionally, anyone who has had close contact in the last fourteen (14) days with an individual who has a current diagnosis of COVID-19 will be denied entry. (The CDC defines [close contact](#) and someone who was within six (6) feet of an infected person for at least fifteen (15) minutes or more over a twenty four (24) hour period.) We all wish to keep our residents, visitors and staff protected, and these measures are designed for that purpose.

All staff members who enter any Villa center are screened upon entry, and any staff member exhibiting a fever, or any signs or symptoms of COVID-19 are not permitted into the center.

Visitors, residents, and staff are expected to observe proper infection control protocol, including proper hand washing or the use of alcohol based hand sanitizers, covering their mouth when coughing or their nose when sneezing, maintaining safe distance from others (ideally keeping a separation of at least 6 feet), wearing a facemask at all times, and minimizing direct contact with others. Center staff is monitoring residents for any signs or symptoms consistent with the COVID-19 virus, including fever, cough and shortness of breath. According to the CDC, symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure.

- **Will this center accept patients from hospitals with confirmed case(s) of COVID-19?**

Yes. All Villa centers will consider guidance from CMS, CDC, state, and local health departments in addition to staffing and personal protective equipment (PPE) levels before deciding to admit a resident regardless of the hospital from which they were discharged.

For any resident who is returning to the center after a hospital stay, the resident will be placed in an appropriate location based on their current condition and needs. Appropriate precautionary measures will be implemented based on their return evaluation, which may include temporary placement on a unit until they are monitored for 14 days and tested for COVID-19.

- **What PPE (personal protective equipment) does the center have available to protect against COVID-19?**

Each center has a supply of the following types of PPE: gowns, face masks, N95 masks, face shields, gloves, and protective eyewear. The use of any PPE is dictated by the presence of COVID-19, the presence of signs and symptoms consistent with COVID-19 or required by federal or state mandate. As of 4/2/2020, CMS requires all long-term care personnel to wear a face mask while in the center. If COVID-19 is suspected in the center, "HCP [healthcare professionals] should use all recommended COVID-19 PPE for the care of all residents on affected units (or facility-wide if cases are widespread); this includes both symptomatic and asymptomatic residents," (CDC, Responding to Coronavirus (COVID-19) in Nursing Homes).

When possible, all long-term care facility residents, whether they have COVID-19 symptoms or not, should cover their noses and mouths when staff are in their room. Residents can use tissues, cloth, or non-medical masks when available. Residents should not use medical face masks unless they are COVID-19 positive or assumed to be COVID-19 positive.



- **What is advance care planning and how important is it?**

Advance care planning is a process by which residents and other appropriate parties (loved ones, advisors, clinicians, etc.) discuss the residents' care goals and values specific to end of life care including the use of life-sustaining treatments such as cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) or mechanical ventilation.

Advance care planning can be difficult, regardless of the circumstances. It is more important than ever to have conversations with your loved ones around their values and goals regarding their care and their wishes for end of life considerations. In our current state, it is also important to consider the worldwide resource scarcity and the community's crisis capacity when making these decisions, and what they may mean for the resident.

Center staff may contact our residents or designee in an effort to ensure the care team can support the values and goals of the advance care plan. We encourage residents and designees to speak with family, spiritual advisors, and physicians throughout this process. Additionally, we ask you to support your loved ones in this process. Center staff can provide additional information regarding code status (i.e. transitioning from full code to DNR), but if you wish to receive further advice regarding other advance directives (e.g. living will) we recommend consulting an attorney specializing in this area.

- **How can I find out more about how many cases of COVID-19 are in the center?**

CMS requires every skilled nursing center to provide updates to the CDC. (Details of the CMS reporting requirement can be found starting on page 179 of the [CMS Final Rule](#).) In addition to providing notification to the CDC in accordance with CMS requirements, each Villa center also provides daily updates posted on its website for the benefit of its residents, their representatives and families, and staff. All parties may easily access this information by visiting the COVID-19 information section of Villa's website at [www.villahc.com/COVID](http://www.villahc.com/COVID). If you have additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Villa center directly.

- **Will residents and staff have access to the COVID-19 Vaccination?**

Yes! Each Villa center participated in the Pharmacy Partnership for Long Term Care which guaranteed at least three vaccine clinics to each center. After the final vaccine clinic, each center will coordinate vaccine distribution through their existing pharmacy. Villa centers are working to communicate the facts around the vaccinations and the vaccination process to staff, residents, and resident representatives. You can also access additional information from the CDC regarding the importance of COVID-19 vaccinations for residents.

### **ENTRANCE TO CENTER/RESTRICTIONS**

- **For anyone entering a Villa center, what is required by the center for access?**

Upon entering, all individuals must immediately sign in at a kiosk located at the main entrance and answer all required screening questions. The screening questions are designed to verify that the individual does not currently have a fever or any history of potential exposure to COVID-19 that would prevent the individual from entering. Individuals who clear the initial screen will be required to either wash their hands at entry, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer prior to access to resident areas and wear a face mask at all times while in the center. Individuals are expected to limit movement in the center to the resident's room or designated visitation area.

- **How will people enter and exit the center?**

All residents, staff, visitors, health professionals and vendors are required to enter and exit through the center's main entrance only. Signs are posted on each door for guidance.



- **Has the center imposed any time restrictions on visitation to the center?**

Yes! Visitation hours may vary by center and all visitors are expected to make an appointment prior to their arrival at the center.

- **If I have a loved one in the center, what is the best way to communicate with them?**

There is no restriction to phone calls and if you have already established a way to communicate with your loved one in the center using cell phones or the center phones, please continue to call and stay connected. Additionally, please visit [www.villahc.com](http://www.villahc.com) to schedule a Villa Video Visit.

- **Does this entrance screening apply to resident visitors only?**

No, any individual who enters the center must comply with this process. This includes all residents, visitors, center staff, medical professionals, vendors, and representatives of state and federal agencies.

- **What is a fever?**

According to CDC guidance, a fever is defined as a body temperature of 100.0° F or above, without the use of fever mitigating medication (e.g. Tylenol or Motrin). If you have any concerns, please act in the interest of public safety and defer your visit.

### **WITHIN THE CENTER**

- **What changes can I expect to see around the center?**

Signs will be posted to provide guidance on the appropriate door for entrance and exit. Signage will be posted on all other doors to advise as to limitation of use during this time. Any doors between common areas and resident rooms should remain closed, and all fire doors will remain closed. When appropriate based on temperatures and weather conditions, windows should be opened to promote fresh air circulation (should not be opened more than 2" (two inches). Elevator use will be minimized, and residents will be directed to confine their presence to their assigned room or unit. You can also expect to see informational postings regarding proper handwashing techniques and information regarding COVID-19.

Additionally, staff will maintain consistent assignments within the center, and all current programs with educational institutions will be suspended. Staff may also direct residents and visitors to alternative locations for limited periods of times when necessary to maintain appropriate "social distance."

Finally, if a resident, his or her family or representative requests transfer out of the center to the hospital setting for non-emergent purposes, staff will contact the local EMS provider to visit the center for purposes of evaluating the resident for the necessity of transport. If EMS does not deem the resident appropriate for transport, then the resident will remain in the center. It is always the intent of the center to minimize the exposure of any resident to a potentially hazardous environment and to minimize transfer trauma. This remains unchanged, but during this time of heightened surveillance, the center priority to treat in place whenever possible is paramount. Center staff will communicate with the resident's physician to confirm all treatment plans based on the resident's condition.

- **What if I am scheduled to attend a care conference for my loved one?**

The center will proceed with all scheduled care conferences. If video conference or phone conference is preferred, attendees may contact the center for arrangements.

- **What more is the center staff doing now to monitor residents?**

During this period of increased surveillance, center staff is monitoring vitals at least daily, and will continue observation for changes in condition related to the presentation of any symptoms of COVID-19.



- **Will communal dining continue for my loved one in the center?**

In centers where dining areas are large enough to accommodate the positioning of residents to maintain appropriate social distance (6 feet apart), dining practices will change from communal dining to cohort dining. Any resident who is under review for COVID-19, currently has an active COVID-19 infection, or presents with signs or symptoms of any condition that may pose a risk to other residents or staff would not be included in cohort dining. However, the practice of cohort dining does permit staff members to provide supervision, assistance and encouragement to those residents requiring such support. Many centers may adjust dining practices to in-room dining if installing cohort dining practices safely is not possible, or where residents prefer to eat in their room.

- **Are loved ones of residents permitted to receive meals from the center?**

To maintain the core principles of COVID-19 infection prevention, food sharing and dining with visitors is discouraged.

- **What is your process for testing residents, staff, and others (contractors, consultants, volunteers) who are permitted to enter the center?**

In addition to the health screening questions required for entry to a Villa center, CMS has issued further directives for evaluating the health of individuals accessing a health care facility which include regular testing based on certain parameters. The parameters and frequency have been set forth by the Department of Health and Human Services. All Villa centers will follow their local and state health department guidelines, as well as CMS guidelines, related to testing, documenting, and reporting.

- **How will the center accommodate the needs of residents to obtain sundry items?**

For residents who typically access other units within the center for vending machine products, designated staff will purchase those items at the request and expense of the resident, eliminating the need for residents to leave their respective units. For residents who are permitted by their physician to leave the center to purchase items at outside vendors, the center will complete errand trips as needed to purchase items at the residents' request and expense. Center staff will work with its residents and their families and representatives to accommodate their requests.

- **Will the center continue to host potlucks and resident birthday celebrations?**

All shared food experiences are suspended. Modified birthday and holiday celebrations will continue to minimize assembly of residents, guests, and staff. The center may host smaller celebrations on each unit or individual resident celebrations to honor residents and their milestones while minimizing the potential exposure of attendees.

- **Will the center conduct resident council meetings as scheduled?**

Center leadership will coordinate with the resident council president regarding the best alternate option for this event, ensuring all residents retain the opportunity to present and discuss grievances, concerns, and questions. This may include conducting meetings by units, wings, or floors. Regardless of the agreed upon meeting modification, the center will comply with all regulatory requirements by providing information and support to all residents.



- **Will center staff continue to conduct regularly scheduled meetings?**

Clinical startup and stand down will continue. Quality Assurance and Performance Improvement (QAPI) meetings will proceed as scheduled. However, all outside attendees, other than the center's Medical Director, are encouraged to attend by phone, video conference, or skype/FaceTime. The center leadership will conduct all-staff meetings by unit. Regional leadership meetings should be conducted via telephone or teleconference.

- **Will Villa Healthcare team members continue to visit the center?**

All essential consulting team members (individuals who support and assist the center operations and care providers) will continue to support their respective centers. They will be screened upon entrance and are directed to stay home if symptoms warrant.

- **Will the center continue to conduct fire and other safety drills?**

Yes. The center will conduct all drills as scheduled. All exits are available and operational during drills only. Upon completion of any drill, all individuals must re-enter the center through the main entrance. At all other times, individuals will only use the main entrance to enter and exit the building.

- **If a resident experiences a room change, and is COVID-19 positive, how long will the resident's belongings be quarantined before arriving in their newly assigned room?**

In the event a resident with COVID-19 needs to change rooms, the resident's belongings will be quarantined for a period of three days before being delivered to the resident's newly assigned room. We know that this delay can be disruptive, though it is our best approach to infection control for personal items, given the information provided by the CDC and other medical experts.

- **Are smokers permitted to continue smoking in compliance with center protocol?**

Yes, with the exception of any resident on a fourteen-day quarantine. Existing rules remain in place regarding the appropriate location for smoking, the use of protective equipment when required, and the proper disposal and storage of smoking products. However, during this time, the center will create a smoking plan by unit for implementation during this time of increased surveillance. Residents who are asymptomatic will be permitted to smoke in designated smoking areas at set times in small groups with appropriate social distancing and individual use of smoking materials. For any resident with symptoms of acute respiratory illness, they will have designated times when smoking will be permitted in isolation to other residents. Those residents will always be masked for transportation to and from the smoking area. Residents, with or without the accompaniment of staff (as required by their individual smoking plan), will be directed to the sole smoking area entrance designated by the center during this time.

Conversely, all visitors, staff and guests are required to enter and exit the center for any reason, including smoking breaks, through the main entrance. No visitor, staff or guest should use any other door for exit or entrance for access to smoking areas.

- **If employee punch-ins are late due to the screening process, what do they do?**

We want all employees to be paid for the scheduled shift, if the punch-in will be after the shift start time, please provide the employee the Time Clock Adjustment Form and forward the completed form to the center HR team member or designee to enter the punch in time.



- **How will I know when it is safe for my loved one to discharge from the Villa center?**

Every situation is different. The staff at all Villa centers are committed to working with our residents and their loved ones to identify safe discharge goals, create a plan to achieve them, and monitor progress towards them. This progress should not be halted or reversed upon discharge. This has always been true and has not changed.

However, the environment residents are discharged into has changed. In addition to their home environment and ability to continue to receive the care they need, we now must consider how local, state, and federal executive orders may play a role. For example, they may mandate different standards regarding human to human contact (e.g. social distancing), operation of businesses (e.g. grocery store hours), and public expectations (e.g. covering of nose and mouth). The impact this may have on our resident's quality of life and psychosocial wellbeing outside of the center is unknown and should be considered as part of the discharge planning process. In many situations, the safest place for residents may be in our center where they can safely interact with others, receive all their meals, live in a clean environment, and receive on-site and available care, among other areas which will contribute to their quality of life and psychosocial wellbeing.

The center staff will use the care conference process to have safe discharge planning conversations. All care conferences will take place by phone, video conference, or skype/FaceTime.

- **Will pet visits continue at the center?**

Each center will apply the most up to date guidance from state and local departments of health regarding pet visits. The core principles of COVID-19 infection prevention must be maintained including, but not limited to, hand hygiene, maintaining social distance of six (6) feet, and wearing a mask. We know people love pets and they bring a dimension to the lives of many that is indescribable.

### **OUT OF CENTER VISITS AND APPOINTMENTS**

- **Will organized group resident outings continue as scheduled?**

All group outings are suspended at this time in an effort to minimize the potential for exposure in large crowds. Center staff will accommodate resident requests for items that must be purchased off site.

- **Are residents permitted to leave the facility for medical appointments?**

For all essential medical appointments, residents are permitted to leave the center. However, residents are encouraged to speak with their outside providers to determine what measures providers are taking to minimize the potential for exposure in their office setting. All residents must always wear a mask and will be screened upon re-entry to the center.

- **If a resident is sent to the hospital where patients have tested COVID-19 positive, will the resident be permitted to return to the center?**

Yes. Based on state directives, the resident must be permitted to return to their home center, regardless of COVID-19 status. We appreciate that this directive from the states may result in the introduction of COVID-19 to a center that has not previously experienced a COVID-19 positive test result or does not currently have anyone in the center who is COVID-19 positive. Each center will continue all necessary infection control, screening, and monitoring practices intended to minimize the potential for exposure to COVID-19 and to identify any potential signs or symptoms of COVID-19 in both the center resident population and staff.



- **Will non-urgent medical services (dentist, podiatrist, etc.) continue monthly?**

The center is working with all outside service providers to determine if their visits to the center are essential at this time. Whenever non-essential services can be deferred, the center is coordinating the continuation of said services to a later date.

- **What is the process for residents who need to leave the building for urgent medical treatment?**

The center will continue its existing practice of working with ambulance services to transport residents to and from the hospital for necessary care and treatment.

- **Will the center allow residents who leave against medical advice (AMA) to return to the center?**

No. Any resident who leaves the facility AMA would be required to return to the hospital for assessment, evaluation, and the creation of physician orders. The resident may be referred to the facility for consideration for re-admission.

#### **DELIVERIES**

- **Will mail and packages still be delivered to the center?**

Yes. However, the center will only accept deliveries at the main entrance. The center will not permit mail carriers and commercial delivery drivers past the main entrance. Any outgoing mail or packages will be tendered at this location as well. According to the CDC, "Coronaviruses are thought to be spread most often by respiratory droplets. Although the virus can survive for a short period on some surfaces, it is unlikely to be spread from domestic or international mail, products, or packaging. However, it may be possible that people can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads" (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html>, March 17, 2021).

- **How will the center receive deliveries of supplies and food?**

When possible, a center designee will receive all deliveries at the center's loading dock. Delivery personnel are not permitted to enter the center. Deliveries that are not appropriate for acceptance at the loading dock or requiring clinical verification of acceptance will be received at the main entrance.

