

# Long-Term Care Facilities Frequently Asked Questions



## Who makes and can change the guidance for Long-Term Care Facilities (LTCF)?

In Colorado, LTCFs are licensed by the state and should follow all guidance released by the state. The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) released [Public Health Order 20-20](#), and frequently releases new guidance on [its website](#). El Paso County Public Health has a limited role in creating guidance for facilities, and defers to the guidance of CDPHE, but can assist with implementing and interpreting guidance.

## Why do some nursing homes allow visitors, while others do not?

[State guidance](#) dictates that visitors are only permissible in nursing homes with no recent cases of COVID-19. To open to visitors, facilities must also have appropriate visitation plans and infection control measures in place.

## If a facility had a recent case of COVID-19, when will they be open for visits again?

In consultation with Public Health, a facility may open for visits after a 14-day period with no new or suspected cases of COVID-19.

## I have concerns about my loved one's rights in their facility and I'm not allowed to visit them; who can I contact?

You may contact the facility administrator or social worker. You may also call the local LTCF ombudsmen's office at (719) 471-7080 or visit [ppacg.org/aging/ombudsman](http://ppacg.org/aging/ombudsman).

## My loved one is a resident in a nursing home and is permitted to go to a doctor's appointment provided he/she wears a mask. Why aren't the same rules in place for birthday parties and other outings?

A doctor's office is considered a controlled environment because staff and patients are screened. Doctor's appointments are also critical to maintaining health. Personal outings do not offer the same level of protection and most are not critical to maintaining health.

## Why can't my loved one, who is a resident of a nursing home, go to the dining room for communal meals?

At this time, nursing home residents are being asked to eat meals in their rooms because this decreases the interaction between residents and staff. By decreasing interaction, the risk of exposure to COVID-19 is lowered.

## My loved one, who is a resident of a nursing home, is struggling with mental health issues due to isolation. Is this issue being addressed?

Yes. Long-term care staff understand that social distancing takes a toll on mental and social health, particularly with this vulnerable group. While the focus is on protecting physical health and preventing the spread of the virus, many long-term care facilities are also making efforts to meet residents' emotional needs. Consult with your facility's activities director or social worker to learn more about what is being done to address your loved one's needs. Phone calls, letters and window visits are also ways to connect with your loved one. Some facilities also allow outdoor visits.

## I am concerned that a staff member with COVID-19 may get my loved one, who is a resident in a nursing home, sick. What is Public Health doing to protect my loved one?

Facilities are required to screen staff before they report for work and follow CDC and local guidance for allowing staff back into the facility who have exhibited signs or symptoms of COVID-19. When a positive case is identified,

Public Health works very closely with facilities to implement guidelines and controls to protect residents. An outbreak occurs when there are two or more positive cases among residents.

**I need to move my family member into a facility. Can I tour different facilities?**

In-person tours are not an option at this time. Check with the facility to see if they can offer a video tour.

**Are there different rules for different kinds of facilities? I've noticed that there appear to be stricter protocols in skilled nursing facilities compared to independent living facilities.**

Independent living is considered a private residence and there is very limited interaction between facility staff and residents. Limited interaction greatly decreases the risk of exposure.

Skilled nursing residents tend to live closer together, have frequent contact with staff and other residents and enjoy many activities in a communal setting. This makes skilled nursing facilities much higher risk and is the reason that they must follow different and stricter guidelines than private residences.