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**Missouri Long-Term Care Ombudsman Protocol for In-Person Visits**

Due to the reduced number of COVID cases, Regional Ombudsman should resume visits to all facilities, even if the facility has a known positive COVID-19 case. If the facility has a COVID wing, in-person visits should be avoided on the COVID wing.

**NOTE: Volunteer Ombudsman** can use personal discretion to decide if they want to visit a facility that has active COVID. Volunteers should keep their Regional Ombudsman informed if they are visiting or not due to COVID in the facility.

CMS guidance released revised guidance on March 10, 2022, titled Nursing Home Visitation- COVID-19 can be found in the link provided. [https://www.cms.gov/files/document/qso-20-39-nh-revised.pdf](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https%3A/www.cms.gov/files/document/qso-20-39-nh-revised.pdf__;!!EErPFA7f--AJOw!QzXdeIqzjLYnLokjm5pbjX4bjdilY57iGa1C8xEX4wSIiQsb9NwKSr3h3h5Ix8kt3AlxKg16T-Fa$).

**Visitation is now allowed at all times for all residents**, this includes indoor visitation.  All visitors must continue to adhere to infection prevention practices.

* Masks, social distancing and hand hygiene are still required.

**PREPARATION FOR VISITS:**

* Calling ahead prior to visiting the facility is no longer required.
* If the facility has residents currently positive for COVID-19 and they want to talk with the Ombudsman, it should be arranged by phone or device for a virtual visit.
* Evaluate personal health for symptoms of sickness, including monitoring of temperature. If sick, the Ombudsman should not visit.
* Review guidance on the use of face masks, other personal protective equipment (PPE), and basic infection control practices.
* Take a copy of the CMS Visitation Guidance with you when making your visits to reference if need be.

**SCREENING/TESTING REQUIREMENTS:**

* If an Ombudsman knows he/she has been in contact with a positive case or suspect case or is having symptoms he/she shall immediately inform the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman (or Regional Ombudsman if a Volunteer). The Ombudsman will suspend all visits until evaluation and all recommendations have been completed. If medical advice is needed, they may also need to contact their health care provider.

**NOTE**: Ombudsman are not allowed to be tested at the facility.

* CMS strongly encourages all visitors to become vaccinated and facilities should educate and also encourage visitors to become vaccinated. Visitor testing and vaccination can help prevent the spread of COVID-19 and facilities may ask about a visitors’ vaccination status, however, visitors are not required to be tested or vaccinated (or show proof of such) as a condition of visitation. If the visitor declines to disclose their vaccination status, the visitor should wear a face covering or mask at all times. This also applies to representatives of the Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman and protection and advocacy systems.

**ENTRY INTO FACILITY:**

* Put on a disposable medical mask upon entry into a long-term care facility. If there is more than one level of care in one location the medical mask should be changed upon entry to each level of care.
* If required, complete a COVID-19 screening with facility staff upon entry into the facility.
* Only bring necessary items into the facility to reduce spreading germs.
* Wipe down items brought into the facility with a disinfectant wipe before and after the visit.
* Always wear a disposable medical mask within the facility and refrain from touching or adjusting the mask. If the mask must be touched or adjusted, hand hygiene through using hand sanitizer or hand washing should be done immediately before and after touching.
* Use hand hygiene – either the use of hand sanitizer or hand washing for at least 20 seconds – before and after entry into each facility and each resident room.
* Always maintain physical distance of at least 6 feet from staff, residents, and other visitors.
* Document each resident/resident room and staff person with whom there is conversation or interaction.
* For notetaking use your own pen and do not lay on surfaces at the facility.
* Avoid sitting on the beds or chairs in the facility and overall avoid contact with surfaces in the facility.
* Place your business card, pamphlets or other information on a hard surface, instead of handing it to someone to limit hand-to-hand contact.

**EXITING FACILITY:**

* Remove and dispose of the medical mask upon leaving the facility and complete any needed hand hygiene.

**Additional guidance for Ombudsmen when doing visits to residents in their long-term care home:**

* The distance and the wearing of masks will likely make communication with residents who are hard of hearing challenging. If communication with a resident is not possible leave an ombudsman brochure on a hard surface.
* Remember the need to allow for privacy communication with the residents.
* Ask at entry for list of all residents and note all new admissions since last visit date. These residents should take priority.
* Check in with resident council president and see what concerns they have.