

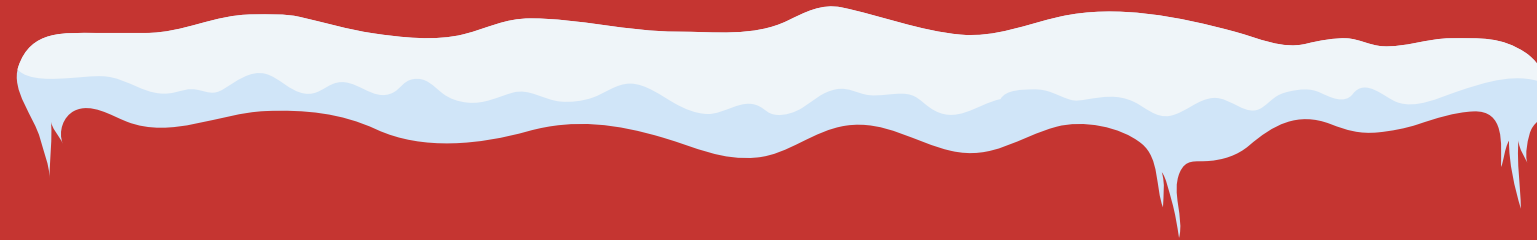


# HOLIDAY VISITATION AND MORE!



Carmen Tilton, VP of Public Policy  
[Carmen.Tilton@tala.org](mailto:Carmen.Tilton@tala.org)

# *Expectations*



Follow HHSC's guidance for general visitation and essential caregivers



Communicate with families, friends, and residents in advance about expectations



Be mindful of any local restrictions regarding group activities or visitation in LTC



Document your holiday procedures/policies (if different from normal visitation procedures), and have it available if asked by surveyors



Continue to observe rigorous infection control practices and internal infection control policies

# General Visitation

## Mandatory

If eligible (no COVID cases in staff or COVID transmission within the building), all ALs must apply for general visitation

If the community had only previously applied for one specific type of visitation (for example, the community initially applied for outside visits and open window visits and had declined to apply for inside plexiglass visits), the community is now required to submit the new visitation request form, building schematic, and other required documentation to request all types of visitation

## Flexibility

If an AL temporarily suspends or reschedules any visitation type, the community needs to document why. Surveyors will be looking at visitor logs and may ask why a log on a given week is empty.

Communities shall schedule the visits and may determine duration and frequency of visits to ensure relatively equal access to visitation for all residents.

# Essential Caregivers

## Mandatory.

- \* All ALs must offer essential caregiver visits for all residents with a COVID-negative or unknown COVID status

AL staff shall screen all essential caregivers every time and must accompany the visitor to and from the pre-determined visitation area. ECs must wear appropriate PPE at all times.

## Flexibility.

ALs shall schedule these visits and may determine duration and frequency of visits based on staff availability to manage visitors coming into and leaving the community.

Communities may temporarily suspend or reschedule essential caregiver visits to address an emerging COVID outbreak.

Communities may decide where the essential caregiver visits can take place (in a resident's room, outside space, an alternative interior space, and etc). The community may change the designated visitation area to address COVID risk, privacy, and staff resources.

# Clergy and Religious Services

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Clergy are considered "essential services providers" under recent CMS guidance, thus they should be allowed to enter under the same general conditions as home health staff (including wearing PPE, screened at the entrance, and etc.)

# Volunteers

Provider Letter Number PL 20-53  
goes into detail about additional  
holiday activities and volunteers to  
help facilitate those activities

Volunteers must adhere to  
infection control principles, screening  
requirements, and testing  
requirements

Volunteers are overseen by staff



## Quick Rules

- <10 total volunteers for activities
- Volunteers are to facilitate, not participate
- Essential caregivers can be a volunteer
- Have to wear PPE, including masks at all times
- Can be used to help manage visitation, disinfection, screening, and monitor visits
- Volunteers must be trained in your community's infection control policies and procedures (document!)

# Other Considerations



Local transmission

Testing availability

Local orders

Community design

Risk of activity

Staff, resident, family preferences

Area resources/ hospital capacity

# Things You Can Do

Volunteer-led activity

Pen pal/card writing

Crafting/cooking demo

Hallway decorating

Cocktail and cheese hour

Family holiday car parade

Bake-off/ sugar cookie decorating

Costumes

Musical performance

Small religious service

# Permitted but...

Leaving for the day-- Conversation screen upon return with possible COVID status change (document!)

Leave overnight-- Automatically placed into unknown COVID-status cohort

Resident Choir-- Group singing is a high risk activity, try to minimize risk

Holiday Feast-- Have to maintain physical distancing, minimize shared dishes; ECs and visitors are not permitted to eat with residents



# Looking Forward

- Resident cohorting after a holiday will be a challenge, so you'll want to make a plan in advance for any reallocation of space to accommodate a potentially larger group of unknown COVID status residents and the staff who will need to take care of them.
- Vaccine distribution will begin at the end of December; every AL community needs to work with its pharmacy partner to handle scheduling and logistics
- Anticipated spikes in cases following the holidays

# \* Vaccine Distribution

- Governor Greg Abbott announced the vaccine distribution program for LTC providers would officially begin Dec. 28th with scheduling and planning occurring the week before.
- Some members have reportedly already scheduled times and locations with their pharmacies, and some members have received general guidance and a few informational handouts but no specifics.
- Scheduling your vaccine days will be up to your community and your pharmacy provider.
- If your community did not sign up through the pharmacy partnership program, please let me know. I will connect you with the DSHS Immunization Program.
- We strongly encourage all residents and staff to take advantage of their Phase 1 access to this critical vaccine.

# \*Spiking Cases

Just because staff and residents will begin receiving vaccines in December and January does not mean that they or you should let your guard down.

- ◆ Your staff will need to be extra careful about their own risks and their protective efforts inside the community.

Now is a good time to evaluate your existing arrangements for testing, your testing strategy, your quarantine policies, and staffing resources.

- ◆ You need to communicate any changes in testing expectations and minimizing exposure with all essential caregivers, as they too will likely engage in higher risk holiday activities.

# *After the Holidays*

Your community should anticipate how and when it wants to resume scheduled visitation after the holiday. Residents who have an unknown COVID status are **not allowed** to participate in general visitation. They are allowed to have essential caregiver visits.

Remember a test, either PCR or antigen, will not be able to identify an infection on the first or second day after exposure. Keep this timing in mind when developing a testing strategy.

If the community identifies a positive case (staff or residents), the community needs to inform the regional office for HHSC and immediately cease all general visitation.

If the community through contact tracing anticipates a large amount of exposure and potential spread, the community may consider temporarily rescheduling essential caregiver visits.

# Legislative Session



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Carmen Tilton, VP of Public Policy  
Carmen.Tilton@tala.org

Version 3.6 of the COVID Response  
Plan for ALFs  
Updated Provider Letters  
HHSC FAQ document  
Under the Dome e-blast from TALA