

April 7, 2021

Dear Long-Term Care Provider,

On March 17 and April 7, 2021, DPH released updated versions of the Administrative Order for Long-Term Care Facilities regarding visitation guidelines. These updated recommendations align with recently released CDC and CMS protocols regarding visitation related to vaccination status. We are aware these recommendations slightly differ from CDC recommendations for vaccinated individuals in the community setting; however, these guidelines are developed to provide the highest level of safety for the residents, staff, and the community.

We are pleased that the COVID-19 positivity rate has declined, and many residents have been vaccinated through the Federal Pharmacy Program, which reduces the risk of spread in long-term care facilities. In the updated Administrative Order, DPH provides expanded infection control guidelines for all Georgia long-term care facilities to offer visitation for all residents, particularly when the COVID-19 county positivity rate is below 10% and when an outbreak is not occurring. Compassionate care visits are to be offered during all reopening phases and even during outbreaks.

Visitation is not recommended for unvaccinated residents when the COVID-19 county positivity rate is above 10% and resident vaccination rates are below 70%. DPH also recommends when a COVID-19 outbreak occurs, to consult with DPH on whether the facility can safely offer visitation:

The following are priority highlights when considering reopening (with Administrative Order page number reference):

- All residents, staff, and visitors should continue to wear a mask regardless of vaccination status and follow additional core infection control measures (See page 4 of 27).
- Facility is to maintain an observation unit for admissions/readmissions (See page 6 of 27).
- Residents fully recovered from COVID-19 or who are fully vaccinated may be placed in the general population (See page 6 of 27).
- We do not recommend quarantine of residents who leave facility for day treatments. (i.e., dialysis; See page 7 of 27).
- Phase I is designed for vigilant infection control during heightened virus spread (See page 8 of 27).
- Phase II is the least restrictive phase for operating (See page 8 of 27).
- Facilities should determine the number of visitors, time constraints and location of visits (See pages 9-11).
- Visitation may be limited for visitors unable/unwilling to comply with core infection prevention practices (See page 10 of 27).
- Visitors are to be socially distanced from other residents and staff. Fully vaccinated residents may engage in close contact with their visitor while following infection control practices (See page 11 of 27).
- Non-medically necessary trips outside the visits should be limited (See page 12 of 27).
- Continue to screen residents three times a day (See page 13 of 27).
- Residents may participate in occasional social excursions from the facility while following infection control protocols (See page 13 of 27).

Please refer to the complete **Administrative Order for Long-Term Care Facilities Reopening Guidance** at <https://dph.georgia.gov/administrative-orders> for more details.

DPH has a professional team of infection preventionists to support long-term care facilities in reopening and providing safe visitation practices. If you have any questions regarding infection control or your reopening practices, please contact us below.

State Region/Districts	Resource	Contact Information
North (Rome, Dalton, Gainesville, Athens) Districts 1-1, 1-2, 2, 10	Sue Bunnell and Mary Whitaker	Sue.Bunnell@dph.ga.gov (404-967-0582) Mary.Whitaker@dph.ga.gov
Atlanta Metro (Cobb-Douglas, Fulton, Clayton, Lawrenceville, DeKalb, LaGrange) Districts 3-1, 3-2, 3-3, 3-4, 3-5, 4	Teresa Fox, Cyndra Bystrom, and Renee Miller	Teresa.Fox@dph.ga.gov (404-596-1910) Cyndra.Bystrom@dph.ga.gov Renee.Miller@dph.ga.gov
Central (Dublin, Macon, Augusta) Districts 5-1, 5-2, 6	Theresa Metro-Lewis and Karen Williams	Theresa.Metro-Lewis@dph.ga.gov (404-967-0589); Karen.Williams13@dph.ga.gov (404-596-1732)
Southeast (Valdosta, Albany) Districts 8-1, 8-2	Connie Stanfill	Connie.Stanfill1@dph.ga.gov (404-596-1940)
Southwest (Columbus, Savannah, Waycross) Districts 7, 9-1, 9-2	Regina Howard	Regina.Howard@dph.ga.gov (404 967-0574)
Backup/Nights/Weekends	Jeanne Negley and JoAnna Wagner	Jeanne.Negley@dph.ga.gov (404-657-2593); Joanna.Wagner@dph.ga.gov (404-430-6316)

We greatly appreciate your efforts to keep patients safe and healthy in Georgia. If you have additional questions, please email us at hai@dph.ga.gov or call 404-657-2588 and ask for a member of the Healthcare-Associated Infections Team.

Sincerely,

The Georgia Healthcare Associated Infections/Antimicrobial Resistance Team
HAI@dph.ga.gov