



NC DEPARTMENT OF
**HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES**

ROY COOPER • Governor

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MARK PAYNE • Director, Division of Health Service Regulation

March 24, 2021

TO: N.C. Licensed Adult Care Homes & Family Care Homes

FROM: Megan Lamphere, Chief 
DHSR Adult Care Licensure Section

RE: Updated Visitation Guidance and Residents' Rights

To begin, the Adult Care Licensure Section would like to commend the many adult care home and family care home providers who have recognized the crucial importance of visitation, particularly during these unprecedented times of COVID-19, and who have facilitated visits between residents and their families when safe to do so. Specifically, I have heard many examples of providers facilitating compassionate care visits, not just at the end of life, but when residents are suffering from isolation, declines in their health, and other critical times when visitation with loved ones are needed most. For this, I thank you.

I also want to take this opportunity to remind adult care homes and family care homes that the Department issued [Guidance for Visitation and Quarantine in Long Term Care Facilities](#) on March 16, 2021. Given rapid declines in COVID-19 cases in facilities and the vaccination of residents and staff, many facilities meet criteria for resuming indoor visitation. In addition, state guidance allows facilities to conduct compassionate care visits as needed at any time. The guidance also addresses situations where residents leave the facility for appointments, outings, and off-site visitation, and if or when quarantine is appropriate.

Although COVID-19 has changed how visitation is carried out, residents continue to have the right to associate (visit) and communicate privately with people of their choosing (N.C.G.S. § 131D-21(8)) and receive a reasonable response to their requests (N.C.G.S. § 131D-21(7)). Complaints alleging the failure of a facility to allow visitation when safe to do so will be investigated and cited accordingly. Providers should ensure they are knowledgeable of and adhering to the guidance related to visitation and, most importantly, compassionate care visits. Providers should also note that compassionate care visits **are not limited** to end-of-life situations. They can be, and should be, allowed for a number of situations determined by each resident's physical, mental, and emotional needs. Please take this opportunity to review your current visitation policies and communicate that policy to residents and their families.

NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES • DIVISION OF HEALTH SERVICE REGULATION

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As an agency, we cannot underscore enough the importance of visitation and compassionate care visits enough during these difficult times. Ample guidance has been provided to facilities to ensure practical and safe visitation can occur. As such, the DHSR Adult Care Licensure Section and County Departments of Social Services will continue to investigate all complaints regarding a facility's failure or refusal to accommodate reasonable visitation, especially compassionate care visits. **Residents' rights will be enforced.**

Again, we sincerely thank those providers who have made visitation for residents a priority over the past several months. We appreciate the work you are doing to protect the health, safety, and well-being of residents. We are hopeful that the continued distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine will eventually allow for residents and their loved ones to be able to visit together without worry once again.

Please direct any questions you may have about this memorandum to DHSR.AdultCare.Questions@dhhs.nc.gov.