



March 12, 2021

Dear FutureCare Residents and Families,

This week marks one full year since we began physically distancing from one another. I am therefore especially pleased today to share this news: the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), in conjunction with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), has approved **major steps toward reuniting with our loved ones**.

Effective immediately, the CMS updated visitation guidance for nursing homes. They include the following guidelines:

- The guidance now allows for indoor visits unless the resident has been infected or is in quarantine. Indoor visitation will be suspended if a new case of COVID-19 among residents or staff is identified while the facility conducts outbreak testing. If no further cases are identified, then visitation will resume in other areas of the facility in which there are no COVID-19 cases. Additionally, indoor visitation for unvaccinated residents may be suspended if COVID-19 positivity rates reach greater than 10% in the community.
- If a resident is fully vaccinated, they can choose to have close contact - which includes touch - with a visitor while wearing a secure face mask and performing hand hygiene before and after the visit.
- Visitors will no longer be required to show proof of testing or vaccination as a condition of visitation. However, we encourage you to get tested on your own prior to coming to the facility and when possible, we will offer on-site Point of Care (POC) testing for our families and visitors when requested. **Please contact the facility to schedule your visit and to request a COVID-19 POC test if desired. Scheduling visits is necessary so that we can maintain safe numbers of visitors in any given area and ensure we remain compliant with all distancing and other infection control protocols and are able to conduct testing for those who want it.**
- **The guidelines stress that outdoor visitation remains preferred** even when the resident and visitor are fully vaccinated. Weather permitting, these will be an available option.
- Compassionate care visits and residents requiring support persons visits will be permitted at all times, consistent with the resident's plan of care.

Visitors will continue to be screened for symptoms, continue to physically distance from other residents and staff in the facility, and follow all directions provided by the facility staff while visiting.

The loosening of these restrictions is long-awaited and demonstrates progress in our battle against COVID-19. However, in order to keep moving forward, we still need **your help abiding by the safety guidelines**.

CMS still requires adhering to the major principles of COVID-19 infection prevention that will keep your loved ones safe as we move to win this war against COVID-19. We are still in the battle, and the following steps will help get us closer to victory. **Regardless of vaccination status**, everyone should still:

- Practice physical distancing.
- Wear a mask.
- Practice proper hand-washing hygiene.
- Get vaccinated when the opportunity arises.

Federal and local health officials took care to acknowledge the enormous emotional toll that separation and isolation has taken on nursing home residents and their loved ones. We've all seen and experienced this toll. Hugging our loved ones is something many of us will never again take for granted.

Finally, we've been informed that the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) will be conducting a 4th vaccine clinic in the near future for those residents or staff in need of a second vaccine. We still are waiting on further direction from MDH regarding ongoing vaccination availability for staff and residents who were not vaccinated at previous clinics and will keep you updated as we learn more.

We appreciate your support and continued cooperation during this hopeful time and continue to offer our best wishes for a wonderful, safe spring - closer to your family members.

Sincerely,

Executive Director
FutureCare