



Topic: Guidance for Residential Providers on Visits with Family and Friends

Effective Immediately

Indoor, outdoor and off-site visits must be offered by residential providers for residents who elect to engage in them, including residential programs for persons with Traumatic Brain Injury. Even with prudent steps being taken to reduce risk of COVID-19 infection, neither the provider nor Division can guarantee that transmission will not occur. Any staff, regardless of vaccination status, must continue to wear a well-fitted face mask unless doing so would create a risk to workplace health, safety or job duty as assessed by the employer, and physically distance (as appropriate for the care of residents) when working with staff and residents who are unvaccinated/not fully vaccinated.

Providers are permitted to inquire about vaccination status of participants, visitors and staff so long as they follow all privacy requirements are in compliance with HIPAA protections, (e.g., do not ask the status in front of other others) and any other applicable federal or state law. Visitors are not required to provide this information. If vaccination status is unknown then it is to be assumed the person is not vaccinated. Providers may establish their own policies regarding staff vaccination.

*People are considered fully vaccinated for COVID-19 ≥ 2 weeks after they have received the second dose in a 2-dose series (Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna), or ≥ 2 weeks after they have received a single-dose vaccine (Johnson and Johnson [J&J]/Janssen).

Background Rationale and Evidence for Public Health Recommendations for Fully Vaccinated People¹

COVID-19 vaccines currently authorized in the United States are effective against SARS-CoV-2, including severe COVID-19 disease. Preliminary evidence suggests that the currently authorized COVID-19 vaccines may provide some protection against a variety of strains. A growing body of evidence suggests that fully vaccinated people are less likely to have asymptomatic infection and potentially less likely to transmit COVID-19 to others. Further investigation is ongoing.

The risks of COVID-19 infection in fully vaccinated people cannot be completely eliminated as long as there is continued community transmission of the virus. Vaccinated people could potentially still get COVID-19 and spread it to others. At this time, there is limited data on vaccine protection in people who are immunocompromised. People with immunocompromising conditions, including those taking immunosuppressive medications, should discuss the need for personal protective measures after vaccination with their healthcare provider.

Visitation

Regardless of vaccination status, staff and residents who have recently tested positive for or have [symptoms](#) of COVID-19 and have not yet met the criteria for the discontinuation of isolation should follow CDC recommendations found at [What to Do If You Are Sick](#). This includes staying home except to get medical care, separating yourself from other people, etc. Symptomatic staff shall not be permitted to work. Symptomatic residents shall be tested at the direction of a healthcare professional and not engage in any type of visitation unless cleared by their healthcare professional.

¹ https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/science/science-briefs/fully-vaccinated-people.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fmore%2Ffully-vaccinated-people.html

Residents who are unvaccinated/not fully vaccinated who have recently had [close contact](#) (less than 6 feet for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a period of 24 hours) with a person with COVID-19 shall be placed in quarantine until they meet the requirements for release from quarantine by a healthcare professional. This may include testing for COVID-19.

Staff who are unvaccinated/not fully vaccinated and who have had close contact with a person with COVID-19 should be excluded from work per NJDOH [Guidance for COVID-19 Diagnosed and/or Exposed Healthcare Personnel](#).

Indoor, outdoor and off-site visits are permitted for any resident and their visitor(s), regardless of vaccination status. Providers may require visits to be scheduled in advance, as was allowed pre-pandemic. Each person participating in a visit must adhere to the protocols described in [Screening in Residential and Congregate Day Program Settings](#).

For indoor and outdoor visits, fully vaccinated residents and their fully vaccinated visitors are not required to wear a mask or socially distance when alone during their visit. Visitors should wear a well-fitted mask and physically distance from other staff/residents/visitors with whom they are not visiting.

If the visitors or residents being visited with are not fully vaccinated then the visitors are to wear a well-fitting face mask. The resident is to wear a well-fitting face mask as tolerated/medically advisable. The safest approach is for everyone to maintain physical distancing and to wear source control. However, if the resident is fully vaccinated, they can choose to have close contact (including touch) with their unvaccinated visitor(s) while both continue to wear well-fitting source control. Visitors should wear a well-fitted mask and physically distance from other staff/residents/visitors with whom they are not visiting.

Visits Within a Congregate Residential Setting

Indoor visitation in congregate residential settings must be permitted so long as no residents have tested positive for COVID-19 within the last 14 days, no residents in the home are currently symptomatic of COVID-19 infection, and no staff have tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 14 days*. In the case of symptomatic residents (regardless of vaccination status), testing for COVID-19 as directed by a healthcare professional shall occur. Indoor visits should not take place in the setting during that period unless result(s) are negative for all symptomatic and/or unvaccinated/not fully vaccinated residents.

*If a staff member who had contact with residents tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 14 days, it does not preclude indoor visits if all the residents of the home are vaccinated. If one or more residents of the home are not fully vaccinated and had close contact with that staff person, indoor visits shall not take place until 14 days have passed. Testing for COVID-19 as directed by a healthcare professional shall occur. Providers shall advise visitors whether any staff have tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 14 days to help inform their decision whether to proceed with a planned visit.

Outdoor Visits

Visits outside of the residence must be permitted, weather permitting, when the criteria for visits within the residence are not possible due to this policy.

Off-Site Visits

Off-site visits with a family member or friend, whether for a few hours or overnight, must be permitted for residents who are not currently positive of or symptomatic for COVID-19. Fully vaccinated residents do not have to isolate upon return unless they were a close contact to a suspected or confirmed case. A resident who is unvaccinated/not fully vaccinated does not have to isolate upon return to the residential setting unless he or she, or the person returning them from their visit, report exposure (15 or more cumulative minutes within 24-hours) to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19. If this is the case, a 14 day quarantine period is required. Testing for COVID-19 as directed for the resident(s) by a healthcare professional shall occur.