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Long-Term Care Facility Visitation Expectations

Since the issuance of the Florida Division of Emergency Management Emergency Order 20-009 on September 1, 2020, the Agency has published Questions and Answers to address common questions. In an effort to respond to key areas of concerns and questions, please carefully review the following guidance regarding visitation for long-term care residents:

It is critical that long-term care facilities take these actions now:

Immediately implement procedures to enable Essential Caregivers and Compassionate Care visitors to visit your residents. Establishing your plan for Essential Caregivers and Compassionate Care visitors should be the priority.

It is important that the services of an Essential Caregiver be noted in the resident care plan or service plan, but this action should be handled expeditiously. A modification to a service plan for an assisted living facility does not require a change to the 1823 or a physician's signature.

Essential Caregivers may be individuals who did not provide services prior to the pandemic. Facilities must allow a resident to designate an individual(s) of their choosing (no more than 2) regardless of whether they have provided services in the past. The Order allows a person to be an Essential Caregiver to provide any activities of daily living or to provide emotional support.

Essential Caregivers and Compassionate Care visitors may visit any facility regardless of whether the facility has had COVID cases in the last 14 days. The 14-day period since new case onset only restricts general visitation and does not limit Essential Caregivers and Compassionate Care visitors.

Essential Caregivers and Compassionate Care visitors are not required to maintain social distancing from the resident they visit, but must wear appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) at all times. Social distancing must be maintained from all other residents and staff.

Visitor testing may be required by the facility but only when paid for by the facility. A facility may not require visitors be tested at their own expense.

The Order also clarifies that residents may leave the facility for health care services and wear a mask while out of the facility. These residents are not required to be quarantined upon return to the facility solely based on leaving for an appointment.

It is critical that you communicate with residents and families your facility status regarding visitation by Essential Caregivers, Compassionate Care visitors, and general visitation.

The Agency is handling complaints regarding compliance with the Order, but in many cases, issues involve lack of communication with family members. Please take these steps now to ensure the well-being of your residents and compliance with the Order and other regulatory standards.

The Agency for Health Care Administration is committed to better health care for all Floridians. The Agency administers Florida's Medicaid program, licenses and regulates more than 44,000 health care facilities and 53 health plans, and publishes health care data and statistics at www.FloridaHealthFinder.gov. Additional information about Agency initiatives is available via Facebook (AHCAFlorida), Twitter (@AHCA_FL) and YouTube (/AHCAFlorida).

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