

Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19): Visitation for Intermediate Care Facilities (ICF)

This document provides best practice recommendations for indoor and outdoor visitation in intermediate care facilities (ICF) in the District of Columbia. The following measures should be taken to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission when visitation occurs. **Except for current mandates in effect under a Mayor's Order or other existing local or federal regulation, any definitive action statements made in this guidance (e.g., "must") are considered essential best practice recommendations to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.** Restrictions on visitation do not apply to compassionate care situations and essential visitors or personnel, as determined by Department of Disability Services (DDS).

Guidelines for Safe Visitation

- **All visitors must wear well-fitting masks or respirators¹ while inside the facility as outlined in this guidance, regardless of their vaccination status or personal history of COVID-19 infection.**
- Outdoor visitation is still preferred over indoor when possible.
- When choosing a visitation space (e.g., person supported's room, a dedicated visitation space, or outdoors), facilities should consider the building's structure or outdoor area's layout and the needs of the persons supported.
- The facility must convey information on safe visitation practices to visitors at the start of their visit.
- There must not be any new facility onset COVID-19 cases (suspected or confirmed) in anyone who has been in the ICF (person residing in the facility, direct care staff, visitor, etc.) for two consecutive weeks.
- The ICF must not be undergoing testing related to an outbreak.
- Facilities must maintain a record of the vaccination status of persons supported, direct care staff and other healthcare personnel. Maintaining this information for frequent visitors is also recommended.
- Collect and document visitors' full names, phone number, full home address and the email and name of the person they are visiting. Maintain records for 30 days to assist with contact tracing.
 - The ICF must be able to furnish contact tracing data to DC Health (in accordance with [D.C. Official Code § 7-139 in Subchapter II. Prevention of Spread of Communicable Diseases](#)) within 12 hours of it being requested.
- Facilities should have a 14-day supply of all personal protective equipment (PPE) that would be necessary to respond to an outbreak without dependence on public health stockpiles.
- **A person is considered up to date² with their COVID-19 vaccine after they have received all recommended doses of the vaccine, including all recommended booster doses. Anyone who does not meet the definition of up to date must follow guidance for unvaccinated persons.**

Considerations for visits to persons supported who are up to date² with their COVID-19 vaccine (who are not immunocompromised³)

- While alone in the person supported's room or the facility's designated visitation room, persons supported and their visitor(s) can choose to have close contact (including touch) but

¹ For the rest of this guidance, the term mask will be used to refer to either masks or respirators.

² For current information, see *Stay Up to Date with Your COVID-19 Vaccines* at cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/stay-up-to-date.html

³ **Immunocompromised** means having a weakened immune system due to a medical condition or from taking medications that suppress the immune system. This includes, but is not limited to: people on chemotherapy, people with blood cancers like leukemia, people who have had an organ transplant or stem cell transplant, and people on dialysis.

should still wear masks (especially if a visitor is not up to date on their COVID-19 vaccine or has an unverified vaccination status). Visits where the person supported chooses to allow a visitor to remove their mask in this scenario should be strongly discouraged.

- While in the facility, visitors should wear masks and maintain physical distance of 6 feet at all times from healthcare personnel and other persons supported that are not part of their group.
- While outside, persons supported and their visitor(s) can choose to have close contact (including touch) and to not wear masks, as long as they maintain physical distance of at least 6 feet from healthcare personnel and other persons supported.
- Participation in gatherings (indoor or outdoor) with other residents and families can occur with the following considerations if DC has **MODERATE** or **LOW** levels of community transmission (sustained for at least two weeks as per the CDC COVID-19 Data Tracker⁴):
 - **If all participants are verified to be** up to date on their COVID-19 vaccine:
 - Masks are only needed when indoors.
 - Physical distancing is required indoors (for persons supported and their visitors) during meals when masks are removed (i.e., when actively eating or drinking).
 - If any participants are unvaccinated or have an unverified vaccination status, then all participants must wear masks and maintain six feet of physical distancing from others. If the activity includes a meal, masks must be worn when not actively eating or drinking.
- Family meals with a person supported and their visitor(s) can occur outdoors without use of masks or physical distancing if all visitors are also up to date on their COVID-19 vaccine
 - Other persons supported from the same household can also join, if up to date on their COVID-19 vaccine.

Considerations for visits to persons supported who are unvaccinated, partially vaccinated, not up to date² on their COVID-19 vaccine, or immunocompromised³ (regardless of vaccination status)

- The safest approach for persons supported who are unvaccinated, partially vaccinated, not up to date on their COVID-19 vaccine, or immunocompromised is for everyone to maintain 6 feet of physical distancing and to wear masks (indoors or outdoors).
 - While alone in the person supported's room, the facility's designated visitation room, or outdoors, the person supported can choose to have close contact (including touch) with their visitor(s).
 - Decisions for close contact in a scenario where a person supported is unable to safely wear a mask AND unable to make an informed decision (i.e., weighing the risks and benefits of close contact) should be made in consultation with the designated decision maker and healthcare provider.
- Participation in gatherings (indoor or outdoor) with other persons supported and visitors can occur with the following considerations if DC has **MODERATE** or **LOW** levels of community transmission (sustained for at least two weeks as per the CDC COVID-19 Data Tracker⁴):
 - All participants must wear masks indoors.
 - All participants are recommended to wear masks outdoors.
 - Visitors must maintain 6 feet of distance from the resident they are visiting.
 - Groups [e.g., a resident and their visitor(s)] must maintain six feet of distance from other groups (regardless of vaccination status of people at the gathering).
- Family meals with an unvaccinated, partially vaccinated, not up to date, or immunocompromised (regardless of vaccination status) person supported and their visitor(s) can occur outdoors with the following considerations:

⁴ The CDC COVID-19 Data Tracker can be found at covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view?list_select_state=all_states&list_select_county=all_counties&data-type=Risk

- All participants are recommended to wear masks when not actively eating/drinking.
- Visitors must remain at least 6 feet from the person supported.
- Other unvaccinated, partially vaccinated, not up to date, or immunocompromised (regardless of vaccination status) persons supported from the same household must not be present.

Preparing for visitation

- Notify families about visitation policies and procedures in the ICF.
- The notification should include:
 - Precautions being taken to keep persons living in the ICF safe.
 - Expectations and requirements for visitors, describing at minimum:
 - The symptom screening process.
 - All terms of indoor and outdoor visitation, including mask and physical distancing requirements, how to summon staff if needed, and what will cause a visitor to be denied entry.
 - Steps visitors must/should take before the visit, upon arrival, and during the visit.

During indoor visitation

- Limit indoor visitors to people who can comply with mask and physical distancing requirements.
- Limit indoor visitation to areas that allow for appropriate physical distancing.
 - The space must have proper ventilation (open windows, etc.).
 - The visitation area must only be used in accordance with the vaccination status considerations appropriate for each person supported.
- If the person supported is in a single-person room, visitation may occur in their room.
- Visits for persons supported who share a room should be conducted outside the person's room, if possible.
 - If visitation is occurring in a designated area in the facility, facilities should consider scheduling visits so that multiple visits are not occurring simultaneously, to the extent possible.
 - If in-room visitation must occur (e.g., the person supported is unable to leave the room), a roommate should not be present during the visit, if possible. If neither of the persons supported are able to leave the room, facilities should attempt to enable in-room visitation while maintaining recommended infection prevention and control practices, including physical distancing and the use of masks for source control.
- More than one person supported may have a visitor(s) in the facility (excluding a person supported's room), as long as there is sufficient space to allow for physical distancing (see *Considerations for visits* sections on pages 1-3).
- Facilities must perform screening for any visitors or non-medical service providers before entering the ICF, regardless of their vaccination status. Facilities must:
 - Screen all visitors and service providers.
 - Screen for fever and other symptoms of COVID-19 infection.⁵
 - **The following categories of visitors may not enter the facility:**
 - Visitors who have COVID-19 symptoms or known close contact with a COVID-19 positive person within the last **14 days**, *regardless* of their vaccination status or personal history of COVID-19 infection.
 - Visitors who have had a positive COVID-19 test and have **not** met DC Health criteria for discontinuation of isolation in healthcare

⁵ **Symptoms of COVID-19** may include: fever (subjective or 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit), chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, or diarrhea.

- settings⁶
- Visitors who meet criteria to quarantine due to exposure to a person with COVID-19 or because of travel⁷ and who have **not** met DC Health criteria for discontinuation of quarantine in healthcare settings.
 - For more information, see the following guidance documents at coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance:
 - *Screening in a Healthcare Setting*
 - *Screening Tool Guidance*
 - Visitors should be reminded to wear a mask that does not have an exhalation valve, and to make sure the mask covers their nose and mouth.
 - Have visitors perform hand hygiene upon entering and exiting the ICF.

After indoor visitation

- Cleaning of the room or area should occur after the visit is completed and prior to allowing other persons supported, who were not part of the visitation activities, to enter the room or area where the visit occurred.
- The ICF must clean and disinfect high touch surfaces (e.g., light switches, elevator buttons, door handles) in the facility at least once a shift.

Visitation during an outbreak

- Indoor visitation must not occur if there is suspected or confirmed transmission of SARS-CoV-2 (or any other transmissible infectious disease) within an ICF. DC Health must be consulted to determine if visitation can take place outdoors or at a location outside the facility.

Notification of a COVID-19 exposure

- Visitors must notify the ICF if they develop symptoms of or test positive for COVID-19 within 14 days of their visit.
- ICF staff must notify visitors of outbreaks in the ICF, should such an event occur within 10 days of a visit, and recommend the visitor(s) seek testing.

The guidelines above will continue to be updated as the outbreak evolves. Please visit coronavirus.dc.gov regularly for the most current information.

⁶ For details, see *Guidance on Discontinuation of Transmission-Based Precautions for Patients with Confirmed or Suspected COVID-19 in Healthcare Settings* at coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance.

⁷ For more information, see *Travel* at cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html.