



# pennsylvania

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES  
OFFICE OF MENTAL HEALTH AND  
SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICES

## **MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** All Stakeholders

**FROM:** Kristen Houser  
Deputy Secretary *Kristen Houser*  
Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services

**RE:** Visitation Guidelines under COVID-19 for Residential Treatment including Long-Term Structured Residences (LTSR), Community Residential Rehabilitation (CRR) Services, Residential Treatment Facilities for Adults (RTF-A) and Crisis Residences.

**DATE:** March 31, 2020

## **EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY**

### **GUIDELINES FOR ALL VISITORS TO RESIDENTIAL AREAS:**

In response to growing concerns about the spread of COVID-19 and guidance issued by the Pennsylvania Department of Health, the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (DHS), Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (OMHSAS) has developed the following recommendations for entities operating as adult residential treatment facilities. For child residential treatment facilities please refer to the DHS Office of Children, Youth and Families [Visitor, Meeting and Travel Guidance During Coronavirus Disease 2020 \(COVID-19\)](#) issued March 26, 2020.

- a. OMHSAS is recommending all providers develop temporary modifications to their visitation policies that prohibit all non-employee visitors unless it is a medical necessity, required by court order, adult protective services or older adult protective services staff as outlined in guidance issued under applicable protective services laws. At the discretion of the facility director, additional exceptions may be made where a visit is deemed to be necessary.
- b. The facility director will designate a specific location within the facility for visits that are deemed to be necessary where safe distance protocols can be achieved.

- c. Each visit should be limited to the specific facility approved visitor(s).
- d. All visitors must be screened using the guidance outlined in the [Long-Term Care Facility Visitation Guidance](#) provided by the Department of Health.
- e. Any visitor that fails the coronavirus screen will be prohibited from remaining on the campus/facility grounds.
- f. Each facility must provide a hand washing station(s) or hand sanitizer that is easily accessible to any permitted visitor.
- g. Each facility should frequently sanitize/clean visitation areas.
- h. Visitations should be staggered to limit the number of visitors in the facility at any given time.
- i. Each permitted visitor should complete a screening questionnaire for each permitted visit that includes the date, area, time in, time out, the person visited, the person visiting and the person that completed the visitor screen.
- j. If a person is denied visitation, the facility will make every effort to facilitate video conferencing visits. If video conferencing is not available, the facility director must consider additional daily phone contact with the resident.
- k. Provider agencies should designate a family contact person through which visitation related issues will be addressed.
- l. Facility directors should provide notice of any and all changes to visitation policies related to COVID-19 protection measures to designated contact persons, family members, county mental health agencies and Behavioral Health Managed Care Organizations.

With the Governor's authorization as conferred in the Proclamation of Disaster Emergency issued on March 6, 2020, all regulatory provisions and other policies or rules that would impose an impediment to implementing this guidance are suspended. Those suspensions will remain in place while the proclamation of disaster emergency remains in effect.

Please submit any questions regarding this visitation guidance to [ra-pwomhsascovid-19@pa.gov](mailto:ra-pwomhsascovid-19@pa.gov).