



## **Texas State Veteran Homes**

### **Essential Caregiver Visitation Policy and Procedures**

#### **Purpose:**

To establish policy and procedures that allow and regulate the visitation of an Essential Caregiver to visit a resident at the Texas State Veterans Home who is COVID Negative or Unknown COVID status as required by Title 40, Texas Administrative Code Chapter 19, Subchapter CC- COVID-19 Emergency Rule (the "Emergency Rule")

#### **Policy:**

In accordance with the "Emergency Rule", as of September 24, 2020, Texas long-term care facilities must allow Essential Caregiver visits regardless of whether the facility has received a facility visitation designation. If an executive order or other direction is issued by the Governor of Texas, the President of the United States, or other applicable authority, that is more restrictive than this rule or any minimum standard relating to a nursing facility, the Texas State Veterans Home must comply with the executive order or other direction.

#### **Definitions:**

- **Essential Caregiver:** A family member or other outside caregiver, including a friend, volunteer, private personal caregiver, or court appointed guardian, who is at least 18 years old and has been designated by the resident or legal representative to provide regular care and support to a resident. Up to two designated Essential Caregivers per resident is allowed, however only one at a time may visit the resident.
- **Essential Caregiver Visit:** A personal, indoor or outdoor visit between designated Essential Caregiver and a resident with a COVID- 19 negative or unknown COVID-19 status.

#### **Facility Requirements:**

- Communicate with resident (if able) or resident representative to obtain the designated Essential Caregivers.

- Communicate with designated Essential Caregivers facility testing requirements. The need for a negative COVID-19 PCR or antigen test within 14 days of first visit. (An antibody test is not an acceptable test) This test will
- not be performed by facility. (Additional information on Texas State Veteran's Home testing strategy for future visits is located in Essential Caregiver Requirements section.)
- Schedule and provide Training Sessions for Essential Caregivers
  - Reservation for session is required
  - Number of participants for each session will be limited by number of persons that can be seated in training area maintaining six-foot social distancing.
  - Training will be presented in person by both verbal and video instruction.
  - Training Topics will include:
    - Overview of COVID-19
    - Hand Hygiene
    - Personnel Protective Equipment: Required and Proper Use
    - Cough and Sneeze Etiquette
    - Social Distancing
    - Infection Control Measures
    - Policies, Procedures, Requirements, and Process for Visitation (Explained in further detail in Process Section)
    - Designated entrances and exits
    - Testing Strategy
    - Written agreement that Essential Caregiver understands and agrees to follow applicable policies, procedures and requirements including that the Essential Caregiver will leave the facility at appointed time unless otherwise approved by facility.
- Approve face mask. At a minimum 3 ply non-medical mask or N95/KN95 type face mask. Note: Surgical ASTM Level 3 or Medical Procedure Mask ASTM Level 1 or 2 are also acceptable. Cloth facemask will not be approved.
- If applicable approve face shield or goggles
- Screen Essential Caregiver outside of the nursing facility prior to allowing them to enter facility. (See Process section and Record Keeping below.)
- Record Keeping:
  - Document names of two designated Essential Caregivers in resident record.
  - Develop an Essential Caregiver visitor badge for each Essential Caregiver which includes the resident's name they are authorized to visit.
  - Maintain a log of Essential Caregivers for each resident. This log includes protected health information and must be protected in accordance with state and federal privacy law. Log will include the following required (per Emergency Rule) information about each Essential Caregiver:

- Name of resident being visited
  - Name Essential Caregivers  
COVID-19 test result
  - Documentation of agreement to follow policies, procedures and other requirements as instructed in the facility training and in accordance to signed documents upon completion of the training class.
  - Documentation of training class completion
  - Date and time of the arrival and departure
  - Attestation that the identity of the Essential Caregiver was confirmed
  - Facility COVID-19 Screening was completed
- The staff must escort the Essential Caregiver from the entrance to the designate visitation area at the start of each visit and from the designated visitation area to the exit at the end of each visit.
  - The facility may cancel the Essential Caregiver visit if the Essential Caregiver fails to comply with facility's policy regarding Essential Caregiver visits or other requirements in the "Emergency Rule".

**Requirements of Essential Caregiver Visitor:**

- Must be 18 years old
- The resident, if able may choose up to two people as their Essential Caregivers. If the resident is unable to state who they want as their essential caregivers, the medical power of attorney or resident representative will decide.
- The two designated Essential Caregivers will remain the same until a request for change of Essential Caregiver is submitted in writing and is approved. Their names and relationship will be documented in the resident's record.
- If it becomes necessary to change an Essential Caregiver, the resident and/or resident representative will notify the administrator in writing so accommodations can be made to provide required documents and training.
- The Essential Caregiver must attend facility led class on COVID-19 signs and symptoms, personal protective equipment, hand hygiene, cough and sneeze etiquette and other facility specific guidelines or requirements the Essential Caregiver must abide by during the visit. The potential Essential Caregiver will call to register for classes scheduled by facility. Class must be completed prior to any essential caregiver visitation.

- At completion of training each Essential Caregiver is required to sign documentation that they have received training and understand requirements of visits and will abide by them.
- The Essential Caregiver must be able to understand and follow infection control measures, safety requirements and tolerate correctly wearing a facemask and other required PPE as determined by CDC for the entirety of the visit.
- The Essential Caregiver must provide their own facemask (not a cloth face covering) approved by facility for visit with a **COVID-19 negative** resident.
- The Essential Caregiver must provide their own facemask (not a cloth face covering) and goggles or face shield approved by facility for visit with a **COVID-19 unknown** resident. The facility will provide required washable isolation gown and gloves for visits with a COVID-19 unknown status resident.
- The Essential Caregiver must self-monitor for signs and symptoms of COVID-19
- The Essential Caregiver must provide a negative COVID-19 test result from a PCR or Antigen test obtained within 14-days of first visit. Facility will not provide or pay for this testing. Note: An antibody test is not an acceptable test.
- Subsequent COVID-19 testing will be in accordance with the facility testing strategy as follows:
  - The Essential Caregiver must provide subsequent negative COVID-19 test results equal to facility staff testing as required by Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) per the county positivity rate.
    - If county positivity rate is less than 5% testing is required monthly.
    - For county positivity rate greater than 5% and less than 10% testing is required weekly.
    - If the county positivity rate is greater than 10% twice weekly testing maybe required, or the facility may reduce frequency/duration of visits.
  - The facility will not provide or pay for Essential Caregivers' required testing.
  - This is the minimum testing required, if an Essential Caregiver has signs and symptoms of COVID-19 they are prohibited from visiting and encouraged to seek medical attention and undergo a COVID-19 test.

- If at any time an Essential Caregiver fails to abide by the requirements of this Policy or the "Emergency Rule" the Essential Caregiver's status will be revoked, and visitation will be canceled. Note: The other caregiver will still be allowed visitation as long as they abide by the requirements.
- Once the Essential Caregiver requirements are completed Essential Caregiver visits can be scheduled.

### **Process of Pre-Entry into the Facility and Designated Visitation Area:**

- An Essential Caregiver Visit is not allowed if:
  - the resident has an active COVID-19 infection
  - the visitor has an active COVID-19 infection
  - the visitor has signs of symptoms of COVID-19
  - the visitor has other communicable diseases
- Only one Essential Caregiver can visit at a time.
- Visits are limited to two hours or less. **These hours will be scheduled at designated times at facility discretion due to additional requirements on staff to support the required screening and escort of Essential Caregivers. Additionally, visits may be shortened to ensure all residents have the opportunity for Essential Caregiver Visits.**
- Due to the requirement of facemask use by both Essential Caregiver and resident, visits will not occur during mealtimes.
- Essential Caregiver calls to make an appointment with the facility.
- Facility Scheduler provides the appointment information to the facility screener.
- Essential Caregiver arrives at the facility screening area at the appointment time.
- If Essential Caregiver arrives at screening area late, appointment may have to be rescheduled dependent on other appointments scheduled and at the discretion of the facility screener.
- Essential Caregiver will present photo identification and the name of the resident he or she is approved to visit. The screener will check the information against that resident's record.
- The screener will verify date and results of last COVID-19 test and will check for compliance with initial and subsequent facility testing requirements.
- Essential Caregiver will undergo the facility screening process prior to being allowed to visit. Essential Caregivers who meet screening criteria will be allowed to visit. Essential Caregiver who does not meet screening criteria will be instructed to leave the facility campus immediately and encouraged to seek medical attention and/or quarantine for 14 days. No visit will take place if a visitor has/had:

- Temperature greater than 99.6.
- Signs or symptoms of a respiratory infection, such as cough, shortness of breath or sore throat
- Signs or symptoms of COVID-19, including 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.
- Additional signs and symptoms of COVID-19 as outlined by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) at [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov);
- Contact in the last 14 days with someone who has a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19, is under investigation for COVID-19, or is ill with a respiratory illness
- Positive COVID-19 test in previous 10 days
- Facility screener will approve the Essential Caregiver visitor's facemask and any other appropriate PPE recommended by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance. Note: At a minimum 3 ply non-medical mask or N95/KN95 type face mask. Note: Surgical ASTM Level 3 or Medical Procedure Mask ASTM Level 1 or 2 are also acceptable. Cloth facemask will not be approved.
- For those visits taking place with an unknown COVID-19 status resident a washable isolation gown and gloves will be provided. Staff will assist Essential Caregiver in donning gown and gloves and assure the Essential Caregiver's own facemask, face shield or goggles are donned correctly.
- Appropriate Essential Caregiver's badge will be provided by the facility and worn by the visitor at all times during the visit.
- Hand hygiene will be performed by Essential Caregiver by using facility provided hand washing station or hand sanitizer before and after the visit.
- If at any time during this check-in process any of the requirements are not met, Essential Caregiver will be directed to immediately leave the facility, no visit will take place, and the visit will be canceled.
- Essential Caregiver visits can occur outdoors, in the resident's bedroom, or in another area in the facility that limits visitor movement through the facility and interaction with other residents. These areas will be determined by the facility due to variety of facility layouts. Visit area will be determined during scheduling of the visit.
- Should resident have a roommate it is preferred that the visit takes place other than in the room with the roommate that is designated by the facility and limits visitor movement throughout the facility and interaction with other residents. The roommate is not required to leave the room.
- If the roommate remains in the room during Essential Caregiver visit, social distancing must be maintained. The Essential Caregiver will not provide care or support to roommate. Right to privacy and compliance with HIPAA will be required for a roommate that remains in the room during the visit.

- Should the roommate need treatment that requires privacy during the visit, the Essential Caregiver will be asked to step outside the room during this treatment. Essential caregiver must remain next to resident's doorway and must maintain social distance of six feet from other residents or staff.
- The resident will complete hand hygiene before the visit.
- Essential caregiver will then be escorted by staff to area where visit is to occur.

### **Process of Visitation:**

- Essential Caregiver must stay in designated visit area and shall not leave the area unescorted.
- Essential Caregiver must leave all PPE in place for the entirety of the visit. Facemask must remain in place and fully cover the nose and mouth.
- Resident will wear a facemask that covers the nose and mouth, if tolerated (noted by physician in medical record if not tolerated), throughout the visit.
- Due to the requirement of facemask use by both Essential Caregiver and resident, visits will not occur during mealtimes nor should either resident or Essential Caregiver remove mask to eat during the visit. If need for taking a drink, social distancing is recommended prior to removing mask to drink. Mask should be replaced before close contact is resumed.
- Physical distancing is not required between resident and their Essential Caregiver.
- Essential Caregiver will maintain social distancing with staff and other residents at all times.
- Facility staff may intermittently monitor Essential Caregiver visits to ensure that rules and policies are followed, but not to the extent of impeding privacy.

### **Process of Ending Visitation and Exiting Facility:**

- At the conclusion of visit, both the resident and Essential Caregiver will complete hand hygiene
- Essential Caregiver will be escorted to exit by facility staff at the designated time.
- Essential Caregiver badge will be collected by facility staff. Badge will be cleaned and disinfected prior to storing.
- If gown and face shield/goggles were worn, staff will assist Essential Caregiver in doffing and will ensure proper disposal/storage of such PPE.
- Essential Caregiver will be signed out of the log at the time they physically exit the facility.
- Essential Caregiver should self-monitor for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 after leaving the facility. If at any time they experience any signs or symptoms of COVID-19, they should immediately contact the facility and be instructed to seek medical attention. No visits will be scheduled until Essential Caregiver is cleared to visit per CDC guidelines and in accordance to "Emergency Rule". Staff will move resident visited to facility quarantine area for unknown COVID-19 status and closely monitor the resident for signs and symptoms of COVID-19.