



Iowa Health Care Association  
Iowa Center for Assisted Living  
Iowa Center for Home Care

**For Immediate Release:** March 11, 2020

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## Statement Regarding COVID-19 and Long-Term Care Visitation Guidance

**West Des Moines, Iowa** – The Iowa Health Care Association represents most of the state’s more than 790 long-term care providers, including nursing homes, assisted living communities and home health care agencies, and has been working closely with its members and state health officials to monitor novel coronavirus (COVID-19) developments in Iowa.

“Our top priority is to protect the health and well-being of Iowa’s elderly and most vulnerable residents. What we know about COVID-19 is that it presents the highest risk of serious illness and death to the elderly and people with pre-existing medical conditions,” said Brent Willett, president and CEO of the Iowa Health Care Association. “As health care professionals who care for this vulnerable population, infection prevention and control are core to what long-term care providers do every day all year, and they have a number of tools they use to prevent and control infection on a daily basis. In situations where there is heightened risk, one of those tools is to implement visitation protocols and procedures to protect those in their care and to utilize health screening protocols for anyone entering their facilities. They prepare daily for situations like this and stand ready.”

Recent [guidance](#) issued by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services requires all skilled nursing facilities in the country to substantially limit non-essential visitors to their facilities. “The Iowa Health Care Association further encourages all skilled nursing facilities and assisted living communities to implement additional visitor limitation protocols recommended by the American Health Care Association and National Center for Assisted Living to protect the lives and safety of [skilled nursing](#) and [assisted living](#) residents,” said Willett. “In light of these guidelines, Iowa care providers are encouraged to help facilitate alternative means of communication to the extent possible under these conditions.”

Family members and the public can help by limiting in-person visits to a long-term care facility. The biggest risk with COVID-19 is that people in the community can carry the infection, not show any symptoms, visit a loved one in a care facility, and unknowingly expose them. If you have a loved one in a care facility, consider alternative ways to stay in touch with family members – such as phone, Skype, FaceTime and Snap Chat. If an in-person visit is absolutely necessary, call the facility first to coordinate your visit. Please comply with any health screening requests you receive from the facility before visiting. You may be asked about your exposure to the virus and to wash your hands before visiting. Your assistance in following these protocols will help to ensure the safety and health of Iowa’s elderly and most vulnerable residents.

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### *See Also:*

CMS Guidance: <https://www.cms.gov/files/document/qso-20-14-nh-revised.pdf>

American Health Care Association Guidance for Skilled Nursing Facilities:

[https://www.ahcanca.org/facility\\_operations/disaster\\_planning/Documents/SNF-Guidance-Preventing-COVID19.pdf](https://www.ahcanca.org/facility_operations/disaster_planning/Documents/SNF-Guidance-Preventing-COVID19.pdf)

National Center for Assisted Living Guidance for Assisted Living Communities:

[https://www.ahcanca.org/facility\\_operations/disaster\\_planning/Documents/AL-Guidance-Preventing-COVID19.pdf](https://www.ahcanca.org/facility_operations/disaster_planning/Documents/AL-Guidance-Preventing-COVID19.pdf)