



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

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## **Statement Regarding New Federal Government Long-Term Care Visitation Guidance for COVID-19**

**West Des Moines, Iowa** – The Iowa Health Care Association (IHCA) 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.

Brent Willett, President and CEO of the IHCA has issued the following statement in response to [updated federal guidance](#) from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) issued March 13 regarding visitors at long-term care facilities considering COVID-19. The federal government’s guidance supersedes guidance issued by the American Health Care Association, National Center for Assisted Living and Iowa Health Care Association earlier this week.

“We appreciate the federal government’s action last night to protect the lives and safety of nursing facility residents. Everyone is working toward the same goal: To protect the health and well-being of our country’s elderly and most vulnerable residents. What we know about COVID-19 is that it poses a shockingly high risk of serious illness and death to those over 80 and with underlying health conditions, characteristics which most residents in long-term care possess. The new guidance from CMS is critically important to ensuring that only essential visitors enter nursing homes during the COVID-19 crisis. We must take every step possible to keep this virus out of long-term care facilities, and this is an important one.”

“We understand the concern these visitation guidelines have created for family members with loved ones in long-term care. 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. Working together with CMS, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals and the Iowa Department of Public Health, we all agree that we need to do everything we can to minimize that risk. Our top priority is to protect the safety and health of their loved ones, and we owe it to them to do absolutely everything we can to protect them from this devastating virus. That’s best accomplished by increasing infection control protocols and decreasing the number of people entering nursing homes or assisted living facilities to limit potential exposure.”

“Those who work in long-term care facilities are committed to helping residents communicate with family members and friends through alternative means, so they can remain connected to their loved ones. 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 necessary, call the facility first to coordinate your visit and comply with any health screening requests you receive from the facility before visiting.”

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