

News

November 2, 2020

Revised Health Order for Congregate Care Facilities Expands Guidelines for Compassionate Care Visits

San Mateo County Health Officer Dr. Scott Morrow has issued a new health order revising the visitation guidelines for long-term congregate care facilities to expand indoor visits for compassionate care. The order applies to facilities such as those for skilled nursing, residential care for the elderly, residential treatment centers, hospice facilities, group homes, and others providing care in a residential setting.

Since the prior order of July 14, 2020, visitors to congregate care facilities have been able to meet residents indoors only to address urgent legal or end-of-life concerns. Indoor compassionate care visits may now be provided for a resident who was living with family before recently being admitted and is struggling with the change, a resident who is grieving after the death of a friend or family member, a resident who needs cueing and encouragement with eating and drinking previously provided by family or caregiver and who is now experiencing weight loss or dehydration, or a resident who used to talk and interact with others and who is now experiencing emotional distress, seldom speaking, or crying more frequently.

Limited indoor visits may also take place on a case-by-case basis if outdoor visitation is not feasible due to weather, air quality, or the health of a resident or visitor. The frequency, times, and schedules for outdoor and indoor visits may be set by the facility.

The order stipulates the safety measures, including visitor screening, staff supervision and personal protective equipment (PPE), and other guidelines the facility must follow if it wishes to allow indoor or outdoor visits.

In-person group activities and communal dining for residents are now permitted, as long as they follow guidance from the California Department of Public Health, the California Department of Social Services, and other agencies. But activities where there is an increased likelihood for contaminated exhaled droplets, such as singing, using wind instruments, or participating in a choir, are prohibited.

The full text of the order is [available here](#).

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