



# Virginia Department of Behavioral Health & Developmental Services

## **DBHDS State Facility Visitation Policy Related to COVID-19**

(Updated 4/13/21)

### **BACKGROUND:**

DBHDS is responsible for ensuring the health and safety of individuals admitted to the DBHDS State Operated Facilities by enforcing the standards required to help each individual attain or maintain their highest level of well-being. 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) is a virus identified as the cause of an outbreak of respiratory illness first detected in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China, and has now reached a global scale. On March 12, 2020, Governor Northam declared a state of emergency in the Commonwealth of Virginia in response to the continued spread of novel coronavirus, or COVID-19.

- On March 13, 2020, DBHDS issued a State Facility Visitation Policy related to COVID-19. This was revised on July 24, 2020.
- On May 26, 2020, the Governor signed Executive Order 63, requiring face coverings for all individuals in indoor places of business.

Virginia entered Phase 3 of Forward Virginia on July 1, 2020.

### **PURPOSE:**

This policy serves to provide updated guidance for visitation in the DBHDS state facilities, subsequent to the previous policies issued on March 13, 2020 and July 24, 2020 related to the COVID-19 pandemic in the Commonwealth of Virginia to help control and prevent the spread of the virus, in response to the declaration of a state of emergency by Governor Northam on March 12, 2020. Virginia remains in a state of emergency as of April 13, 2021 and DBHDS asserts that the state operated facilities continue to remain at high risk for outbreaks. As such, facility visitation practices will remain limited, however, the criteria describing the limitations will reflect a balance of minimizing risks to health and safety due to COVID-19, while considering the benefits of visitation to the well-being of the patients/residents at the state facilities. This document provides further specification of criteria for facilities to permit visitors at each facility, on a limited basis, starting April 15, 2021.

### **DEFINITIONS:**

**Visitor** means any individual who is not currently admitted to the facility or not directly employed by the facility. This includes, but is not limited to family members, friends, authorized representatives, guardians, legal representatives, members of the general public, regulatory agencies, and site inspectors.

**Restricted** means that visitors are not allowed in the facility at all, except for contractors and vendors who are mission critical to the operations of the facility.

**Limited** means that visitors are not allowed to come into the facility, except for certain situations, such as individuals who are critically ill or end-of-life, or in the case of a minor child, the visitor is a parent or approved guardian. Limitation criteria may be further specified.

**Discouraged** means that the facility allows normal visitation practices (except for those individuals meeting the restricted criteria), however the facility advises individuals to defer visitation until further notice (ie. Signage, letter, or verbal correspondence).

**Outbreak** is defined by the Virginia Department of Health as an increase in the number of cases of disease observed and in Virginia, an outbreak of COVID-19 is defined as two (2) or more lab-confirmed cases associated with a facility.

#### **RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITY:**

Facility Directors are responsible for ensuring the implementation of this policy and have the authority to make a determination on a case-by-case basis if the level of visitation required by an individual admitted to a state facility needs additional review.

#### **SPECIFIC GUIDANCE:**

General guidelines for all facilities:

- All facilities will have an established single entrance per building for all visitors.
- All visitors must be screened at the time of entry for COVID-19 utilizing a COVID-19 screening questionnaire and temperature check taking into consideration the recommendation provided by the Centers for Disease Control(CDC) and/or the Virginia Department of Health (VDH).
- Visitors who screen positive based on the COVID-19 screening questionnaire or have a fever (temperature >100.4 F) will be restricted from entry into the facility.
- Tele- visitation may be used in lieu of face-to-face visits, and each facility should allow its use when appropriate.
- All visitors are required to wear appropriate face coverings (covering both the nose and mouth) both indoors and outdoors during the duration of the visit, regardless of vaccination status of the patient/resident or their visitor.
- Permitted visitors who do not screen positive but place an additional concern regarding risk of transmission of infection to an admitted individual or staff, may be required to wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) that is made available by the facility to the visitor.
- Facilities will notify all patients, staff, and potential visitors of the visitation policy utilizing multiple means including: signage, verbal, and written notification.
- Each resident/patient may self-designate a maximum of 2 individuals who are permitted to visit during the duration of the person's stay at the facility. For minors or individuals with a legal guardian, that person serves as 1 designated visitor.

- To manage the volume of visitors entering the facility, the facility should implement scheduled visits. Facilities should consider the volume of visitors in the facility that include other individuals who conduct critical infrastructure work at the facility. These individuals (ie. Legal representatives, discharge coordinators, magistrates, law enforcement, and contracted vendors) will not be counted toward a resident/patient's self-designated 2 visitor limit.
- Permitted total visitors are limited to 2 at a time per resident/patient.
- Movement of visitors in the facility is restricted. Visitation may occur only in areas designated by the facility. Outdoor visitation is strongly recommended when possible.
- Visitors who are not able or willing to comply with the facilities' requirements for infection control including COVID-19 screening, wearing a face covering, hand hygiene, maintaining social/physical distancing, and limiting physical contact, may be restricted from visitation.
- Designated visitors who violate facility requirements may also be restricted from visiting. The resident/patient may designate a different person only after 30 days.
- Though it will not be routinely required, the facility may request the visitor to be tested for COVID-19 under specific and defined circumstances to protect the health and safety of staff and residents.
- Due to infection control purposes, visitors are not permitted to bring food, share food during the visit, or bring any items for the resident/patient without prior specific approval of the facility staff.
- If the resident/patient is under any transmission based precautions (isolation or quarantine), only telephone or tele-visitation is permitted.
- Any facility or unit that is certified by CMS as a nursing facility, must also consider any requirements or guidance further specified by CMS.

Visitation is not permitted at the facility if:

- There is an active COVID-19 outbreak at the facility;
- On any unit where there is an active COVID-19 positive individual, except under compassionate care circumstances, for which prior approval by the facility is required;
- The facility or unit where the resident/patient is located has had a positive COVID-19 case within the past 14 days;
- The Facility Director (in coordination with the DBHDS Central Office) deems that visitation poses a significant risk to the health and safety of resident/patients and staff due to COVID-19;
- Directed by the Health Department to cease visitation for any reason.

This policy is subject to change based on guidance and information provided by the Centers for Disease Control and the Virginia Department of Health related to the situation of COVID-19 within the Commonwealth of Virginia.

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Alison Land, FACHE  
Commissioner