

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) issued [revised guidance](#) on March 9, 2020 for skilled nursing facilities (SNFs) for preventing the spread of COVID-19 into SNFs by limiting visitors.

Earlier in the day, the American Health Care Association and National Center for Assisted Living (AHCA/NCAL) issued very similar [recommendations](#) to providers. Both of these guidance documents address screening staff, contractors, vendors and visitors. The intent and purposes are the same except for a few very slight variations in how the guidance documents are written. Both aim at controlling the spread of the virus.

We both recommend:

- Actively screening every person who comes into a center: family visitors, staff, contractors, government officials - anyone who is coming in
- Limiting visits to only those who are essential (AHCA/NCAL and CMS are defining "essential" slightly differently)
- Focusing on good [hand hygiene](#)
- Exploring alternate ways for residents to stay in touch with their loved ones
- Encouraging SNFs to provide communication and updates to families

AHCA/NCAL and CMS agree that what is important is that this virus is serious and deadly in the elderly (much more so than in the general population), and the serious risk of spread and death needs to be taken into consideration when evaluating how to limit visitors. There may be extenuating circumstances, and these decisions need to be made in each individual center with each individual resident.

AHCA/NCAL has prepared a one-page, side-by-side comparison of the two sets of guidance [here](#). There are slight variations in the details of the language.

We have also prepared a template [document](#) for providers to use to explain to families the need for restricting visitors. It is posted under AHCA/NCAL Guidance on our dedicated website, www.ahcancal.org/coronavirus.

Please email COVID19@ahca.org with any questions.

For additional information and resources on the virus, visit our dedicated website on this issue: www.ahcancal.org/coronavirus.

