

**10 FAQ for Friends & Family with a loved one  
in a Skilled Nursing or Residential Care Facility for the Elderly in  
California**

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**Q1. Can I visit my loved one in a nursing home, assisted living, or other group living home during the COVID-19 epidemic?**

1. If you have a loved one who lives in a Skilled Nursing Facility, or Residential Care Facility for the Elderly (also called Assisted Living or Board and Care), family and friends cannot go inside the facility to visit a resident in-person.
  - a. Some people who are infected with COVID-19 have no symptoms. So the purpose of this rule is to prevent visitors from bringing the virus into the facility or acquiring the virus inside the facility and bringing it out into the community.
2. There is an exception made for situations where the resident is at the end of life. Family and friends can visit a loved one in these circumstances, but will need to use full personal protective gear like, masks, gloves, and gowns.

**Q2. Can my loved one leave the facility and visit with me and return?**

1. Your loved one should not visit you outside of the facility and then return. This is because the virus is easily transmitted. They may catch it outside and then bring it back into the facility, putting themselves and others at risk.

**Q3. How can I get help from facility staff calling or connecting with a loved one?**

1. The facility staff must make every effort to help you make regular contact with your loved one through phone calls, video chats, and other online communication.
2. Make sure your loved one has access to a phone, tablet or computer that can be used for calls or video chats.
3. If your loved one needs assistance with calls, contact the facility and ask to set up a regular schedule for calls so they can make sure to be there to assist at a regular time.
4. Ask the facility staff to post your phone number and call schedule in a visible place in their room where so staff will remember to assist at that time.
5. Stay connected by writing letters and cards, visiting through a window, balcony or glass door, or making videos to share with your loved one.

**Q4. What if the staff does not help my loved one call me at the appointed time?**

1. If many of the people living in the facility are sick, the staff may have a hard time sticking to the schedule.
2. If a call is missed, contact the facility and remind them of the schedule. Check to see if a different call schedule would be easier for the staff.
3. If you still can't get in touch with your loved one, the next step would be to call the local Long Term Care (LTC) Ombudsman office in your county. The LTC Ombudsman is a person whose job is to be an advocate for people who live in group settings like nursing homes, board and care homes and assisted living facilities. They can help intervene with the facility to get your loved one the assistance they need.
  - a. The phone number for the local ombudsman office should be posted in a visible place in the facility. If your loved one can't locate the number, call the local 211 help line and ask for the Long-Term Ombudsman Program.
  - b. If it becomes an urgent situation, you can call the Statewide CRISISline number 1-800-231-4024. The CRISISline is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to take calls and refer complaints made by or on behalf of residents in long-term care facilities.

**Q5. What are facilities doing to keep my loved one safe from COVID-19?**

1. Both the federal government and the State of California have provided instructions on the best ways for facility staff to stop the spread of COVID-19. There are links to that guidance at the bottom of the document. For more information: <https://theconsumervoice.org/uploads/files/general/covid-19-consumer-fact-sheet.pdf>
  - a. Just like the rest of us, people who live in group settings like nursing homes, board and care, or assisted living are practicing social distancing. They may not be leaving their room for social events, meals or activities. This means that your regular communication with them is more important than ever to prevent them feeling isolated.
  - b. Staff are required to wear protective gear like masks, gloves, and gowns when they are taking care of residents. They should be receiving training on how to use this protective gear properly.
  - c. Staff at the facility should be washing their hands before and after each interaction with residents. They should have hand sanitizer in every resident room.

- d. Staff should be cleaning and disinfecting all medical equipment in between each use.
- e. If there is an outbreak of COVID-19, staff may move healthy residents to other rooms and keep the residents who test positive isolated.

#### **Q6. How will I know if a resident or staff member has COVID-19?**

1. Residential Care Facilities for the Elderly (sometimes called Assisted Living or Board and Care) must provide immediate notice to all persons in care, families, and staff providing health care in the facility. For a list of Residential Care Facilities for the Elderly in California that have a resident who has tested positive for COVID-19, go here. <https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/community-care-licensing>
2. Skilled Nursing Facilities are encouraged to notify other residents and families when a resident tests positive for COVID-19, while maintaining the privacy of those who are infected. For a list of nursing homes in California that have a resident who has tested positive, go here: [https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/SNFsCOVID\\_19.aspx](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/SNFsCOVID_19.aspx)
3. If you are concerned, contact the facility to ask about infection.

#### **Q7. What should I do if my loved one tests positive for COVID-19?**

1. Stay in close contact with the nurse and staff at the facility to make sure you are informed about your loved ones' condition on a daily basis.
2. Make sure to arrange daily calls or video chats with your loved one so you can monitor their condition and offer emotional support.
3. Make sure your loved one has an advanced health care directive or POLST form filled out to ensure their wishes for care are followed. If they haven't filled one out, ask to arrange a meeting with the facility Medical Director to start one.
4. If appropriate, ask your loved one to verbally designate a medical decision maker (called a surrogate). The staff at the facility must put this in the residents' chart where it will be in effect for 60 days.
5. **Talk to your loved one about their preferences for care. Here are some resources that can help with that conversation.**
  - a. [CA Coalition for Compassionate Care: COVID Conversations Toolbox](#)
  - b. [UCSF Prepare for Your Care](#)
6. **For more information about the COVID-19 virus, go to:**
  - a. [CDPH Guidance for Individuals with Access and Functional Needs](#)
  - b. [CDC: People Who are Higher Risk for Serious Illness](#)

**Q8. What can I do if I am concerned that my loved one is in danger or being abused inside the facility?**

1. Start by contacting the facility and asking to talk to the nurse or staff in charge of your loved one's care.
2. If the facility doesn't provide the help you need, call the Long-Term Care Ombudsman. They assist residents in long-term care facilities with issues related to day-to-day care, health, safety, and personal preferences.
  - a. All facilities are required to post the Local LTC Ombudsman phone number in a visible location. You can also call 211 and ask for the Local Ombudsman number.
  - b. If it is an urgent situation, you can call the Statewide CRISISline number 1-800-231-4024. The CRISISline is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to take calls and refer complaints from residents in long-term care facilities.
3. File a complaint with State Licensing. If you believe the facility is doing something that could cause serious harm, injury, impairment or death, be sure to say that in your complaint. There are different ways to file complaints depending on what kind of facility the person lives in.
  - a. For a complaint about treatment in a skilled **nursing facility (also known as a nursing home, or rehabilitation facility)**, file a complaint with the California Department of Public Health. Go to this website for instructions:
    - i. <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/chcq/lcp/calhealthfind/Pages/Home.aspx>
  - b. For a complaint about treatment in a **residential care facility for the elderly (also known as a assisted living or board and care)**, file a complaint with the California Department of Social Services:
    - i. Call 1-844-LET US NO / 1-844-(538-8766)
    - ii. Email: [letusno@dss.ca.gov](mailto:letusno@dss.ca.gov)
    - iii. To find the phone number of your local Adult and Senior Care Regional office, go to:  
<https://cdss.ca.gov/Portals/9/CCLD/ASCPHONEListing.pdf?ver=2019-05-16-162121-833>
4. If you believe a crime has been committed, contact local law enforcement.
5. If the situation is an emergency and you can't get help, call 911

**Q9. Should I bring my loved one home from a nursing home, assisted living or board and care if there is an outbreak of COVID-19?**

A resident or their decision maker can choose to bring a loved one home from a nursing home, assisted living or board and care at any time. But before a move, the resident or decision maker should consider several factors:

1. Before your loved one is discharged, determine if they can get the care they need outside of the facility. Many people who live in group settings need a great deal of help that requires training. They may need someone to lift them, bathe them, give them the right medicines at the right time, and prepare and feed them special foods. Some residents are getting special therapies inside the facility that they may not be able to get at home. Talk with a nurse, social worker, or LTC Ombudsman to make sure you understand what their care needs are and if these needs can be met outside the facility.
2. If your loved one has memory loss or dementia, caring for them at home or in an environment that is unfamiliar can be disruptive for them and challenging for the person providing care.
  - a. Call the Alzheimer's Association hot line to discuss how to get them the care they need: 1-800-272-3900
3. If you do decide to bring your loved one home from a facility, here are some resources that could help you take care of them at home:
  - a. Call the state 211 number for resources in your area.
  - b. Use this webpage to find your county's Area Agency on Aging that can link you to local resources:  
[https://www.aging.ca.gov/Find\\_Services\\_in\\_My\\_County/](https://www.aging.ca.gov/Find_Services_in_My_County/)
  - c. If the resident is a Medi-Cal beneficiary, they may be eligible for in home assistance through In Home Supportive Services. Learn more at:  
<https://www.cdss.ca.gov/in-home-supportive-services>

**Family Caregiving Resource Links in English:**

- d. [Family Caregiver Alliance National Center on Caregiving](#)
- e. [AARP: Family Caregiving](#)
- f. [AARP: Prepare to Care guide](#)
- g. [Caregiver Action Network](#)
- h. [Caregiver Resource Center](#)
- i. [AARP Prepare to Care guide – LGBT community](#)

**Family Caregiving Resources in Spanish and Chinese**

- j. [Family Caregiver Alliance- En Espanol](#)
- k. [AARP Prepare to Care – En Espanol, Un Guia de Planificacion](#)
- l. [AARP Prepare to Care guide - Chinese](#)

For more COVID-19 & Older Adult Resources, visit [www. Aging.ca.gov](http://www.Aging.ca.gov) and [www.covid19.ca.gov](http://www.covid19.ca.gov)

**For help and support related to Alzheimer's Disease and other dementias:**

- a. Alzheimer's Association 24/7 Helpline 800.272.3900, [alz.org](http://alz.org) or the online community at [alzconnected.org](http://alzconnected.org)

**Q10. What is the State of California doing to help the facility keep my loved one safe?**

1. The State of California is providing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) like masks and gloves to nursing homes and residential care facilities like Assisted Living.
2. The California Department of Public Health and Department of Social Services have 600 nurses who have special training in infection control and they are calling all the facilities in California to provide assistance and guidance about how to reduce the spread of COVID-19. If the facilities need more masks and gloves, they can request them from the state.
3. COVID-19 testing for residents and staff in nursing homes, assisted living and other group settings has been prioritized. This means, that staff and residents should be able to be tested when they need it. If someone tests positive, they can be quickly isolated to prevent the spread to other residents.
4. Officials in California are calling every single nursing home in the state every day to make sure they have the staff they need. The state is providing \$500 stipends to the nursing assistants, licensed vocational nurses and other critical staff to make sure their needs are met and they can continue coming to work.
5. California is also offering no-cost or low-cost hotel rooms for health care workers who have had possible exposure to COVID-19 or test positive for COVID-19 and do not need to be hospitalized.
6. For more information on the official state guidance for COVID-19 in nursing homes and Residential Care Facilities for the elderly, see links below.

*California Guidance for Skilled Nursing Facilities can be found here:*

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CHCQ/LCP/Pages/LNCAFL20.aspx>

*California Guidance for Residential Care Facilities for the Elderly (all types) can be found here:*

<https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/community-care-licensing/policy/provider-information-notices/adult-senior-care>

The California Department of Social Services, Community Care Licensing Division (CCLD) has established a dedicated "[Stay Informed on Coronavirus Disease \(COVID-](#)

For more COVID-19 & Older Adult Resources, visit [www. Aging.ca.gov](http://www.Aging.ca.gov) and [www.covid19.ca.gov](http://www.covid19.ca.gov)



[19\)](#)" page on its website to provide resources of interest to CCLD-licensed facilities on Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), which include translated guidance in Spanish, Tagalog and Chinese.

<https://cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/community-care-licensing>