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| **California Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program (LTCOP) Facility Visit Guidance: COVID-19 Era PHASE I – Version 1.4 7/31/20** |

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| **LTCOP COORDINATORS – *PRIOR TO RESUMING FACILITY VISITS*** |
| This guidance sets forth the circumstances and protocols for Ombudsman representatives to follow during Phase I of the LTCOP Reentry to Facilities under the COVID-19 emergency. ***Note:*** *Ombudsman access to long-term care facilities may be limited in some areas based on County Health Department requirements.*  From an abundance of caution and to avoid any unnecessary risk during this initial phase, indoor visits to facilities will be limited to paid staff Ombudsman representatives who are self-assessing and voluntarily offering to return.  Volunteer Ombudsman representatives who self-assess and are COVID-19 symptom free may conduct outdoor visits during Phase I. Even though volunteer Ombudsman representatives will not be entering facilities during this initial phase, they will be consulted on complaints requiring in-person visits that arise in one of their assigned facilities. Ombudsman representatives should continue remotely contacting residents and facilities.In Phase II, after the LTCOP Coordinator has had experience and feedback from paid staff returning to facilities and has consulted with the State Ombudsman, the Coordinator may authorize volunteers to conduct indoor visits as well.**FACILITY VISIT RESTRICTIONS**During Phase I of LTCOP Reentry to Facilities, * Facility visits must be conducted **voluntarily**.
* Only LTCOP paid staff may enter facilities. *See Considerations for Facility Visits.*
* Volunteer Ombudsman representatives who self-assess and are symptom free may conduct outdoor visits and in subsequent phases may conduct indoor visits.
* LTCOP representatives will not go to subacute facilities or subacute sections of SNFs.
* **Indoor visits** are limited and prioritized as follows:
1. Investigations of serious physical or sexual abuse and neglect complaints.
2. Investigations of non-abuse complaints that cannot be conducted by phone, Zoom, Skype, or other means of virtual communication.

 1. General Facility Visits to facilities with history of higher complaints.

 *(See ODIN FAQs – COVID-19 July 2020 Update.)** **Outdoor visits** are conducted on facility grounds and may include the following:
1. Investigations of non-abuse complaints that cannot be conducted by phone, Zoom, Skype, or other means of virtual communication.
2. LTCOP services such as Information and Assistance and/or Resident or Family Council Participation. *(See ODIN FAQs – COVID-19 July 2020 Update.)*
* All visits are restricted to one facility per day and may last up to three hours.

 * Representatives should limit time spent with residents or staff ***who cannot social distance or wear masks*** to no longer than 15 minutes per encounter.
* ***Whenever possible, follow up with residents and staff for outstanding complaint resolutions via telephone, other means of virtual communication, or email.***
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| **LTCOP COORDINATORS –**  ***PRIOR TO RESUMING FACILITY VISITS (continued)*** |
| **CONSIDERATIONS FOR FACILITY VISITS*** Staff Ombudsman representatives may enter Skilled Nursing Facilities (SNF) and Residential Care Facilities for the Elderly (RCFE) with no confirmed positive COVID-19 cases. Refer to:
* [AFL 20-22.3](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CHCQ/LCP/Pages/AFL-20-22.aspx) issued by the California Department of Public Health-Licensing & Certification (CDPH-L&C) on June 26, 2020 and
* [PIN 20-24-ASC](https://www.cdss.ca.gov/Portals/9/CCLD/PINs/2020/ASC/PIN-20-24-ASC.pdf) issued by the California Department of Social Services-Community Care Licensing (CDSS-CCL) on July 6, 2020.
* *Attachment C – Phase I Reentry to Facilities – Scenarios to Consider*
* LTCOP Coordinator **must** authorize all visits to facilities with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 cases.
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| **PREPARATION AND TRAINING REQUIREMENTS** In preparation for the LTCOP Reentry to Facilities, LTCOP Coordinators or designees must ensure that:* All Ombudsman representatives who will be conducting facility visits have completed:
* The COVID-19 self-assessment requirements daily and prior to resuming facility visits.
* Approved trainings in the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and basic infection control process.

 *See Attachment A – LTCOP Verification of Completion of Staff Competencies to*  *Resume Facility Visits during the COVID-19 Era.** The program provides appropriate PPE and supplies for all facility visits.
* The program seeks to identify and/or obtain, **if possible**:
* Location of designated areas for visits.
* Facilities’ visit protocols.

 *(Best practice: Enter the information into the Facility record in ODIN 2020).** All Ombudsman representatives who will be conducting facility visits abide by a facility’s visitation protocol, **whenever possible, as long as it does not conflict with LTCOP protocols.**
* The program attempts to confirm the status of positive COVID-19 cases with CDPH-L&C, CDSS-CCL, local Public Health, or with the facilities.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**OSLTCO recommends that the LTCOP provide a Sanitizer Kit for Ombudsman representatives to use for each facility visit. The Sanitizer Kit should be in a sealable bag containing adequate PPE to use for the visit, extra PPE, hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, and additional bags for recyclable equipment used during the visit. The kit may also include hand soap and paper towels. |

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| **LTCOP STAFF CONDUCTING FACILITY VISITS –**  ***PRIOR TO THE FACILITY VISIT*** |
| As CDPH-L&C and CDSS-CCL ease restrictions on visits to SNFs and RCFEs, the LTCOP intends to take a conservative and cautious approach to Ombudsman representatives’ reentry to facilities. * Facility visits must be conducted ***voluntarily.***
* OSLTCO recommends that in deciding whether to conduct facility visits during the pandemic, Ombudsman representatives consider any factors that put them in an at-risk population, including the existence of underlying medical conditions. Ombudsman representatives may wish to discuss this with their physician.

To ensure Ombudsman representatives’ safety when conducting facility visits, OSLTCO provides this guidance which contains:* Required steps to prepare for facility visits,
* Restrictions on conducting facility visits regarding the “who, what, when, where, why and how,” and

 * Recommendations of best practices to take prior to, during, and after the facility visit.

**PRIOR TO RESUMING FACILITY VISITS**You **must:*** Complete approved trainings in the use of PPE and basic infection control process and sign Attachment A - LTCOP Verification of Completion of Staff Competencies to Resume Facility Visits during the COVID-19 Era.
* Complete, sign, and submit Attachment B - LTCOP COVID-19 Self-Assessment and Affirmation to your supervisor the same day of the visit.

***Do not visit facilities if you have any signs or symptoms of COVID-19 or other contagious conditions.***[***See the Guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).***](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/end-home-isolation.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fprevent-getting-sick%2Fwhen-its-safe.html) |

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| **LTCOP STAFF CONDUCTING FACILITY VISITS –**  ***PRIOR TO THE FACILITY VISIT (continued)*** |
| **PRIOR TO CONDUCTING A FACILITY VISIT**You **must**:* Call the LTCOP office to:
* Report the name of the facility you plan to visit.
* Confirm whether there are any updates to the COVID-19 status of the facility.
* Discuss the appropriateness of the facility visit with the LTCOP Coordinator or designee. Factors to consider:
	+ Outdoor visits may be an option in some situations.

 * + You may enter Skilled Nursing Facilities (SNF) and Residential Care Facilities for the Elderly (RCFE) with no confirmed positive COVID-19 cases. Refer to:
* [AFL 20-22.3](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CHCQ/LCP/Pages/AFL-20-22.aspx) issued by CDPH-L&C on June 26, 2020 and
* [PIN 20-24-ASC](https://www.cdss.ca.gov/Portals/9/CCLD/PINs/2020/ASC/PIN-20-24-ASC.pdf) issued by CDSS-CCL on July 6, 2020.
	+ You **must** obtain permission from the LTCOP Coordinator if you wish to visit a facility with active COVID-19 cases.

 * + *If available, the Coordinator or designee may direct you to use phone, Pocket Talkers or tablets to assist in distance communication.*
* Review and abide by the facility’s visitation protocol, **whenever possible, as long as it does not conflict with LTCOP protocols.**
* Ensure that you have enough PPE. If needed, obtain additional PPE from LTCOP office.
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| **LTCOP STAFF CONDUCTING FACILITY VISITS –**  ***AT THE FACILITY VISIT*** |
| **BEFORE PROCEEDING TO THE DESIGNATED AREA FOR OUTSIDE VISITATION OR ENTERING THE FACILITY*** Lock personal items such as your purse, backpack, or laptop securely in your vehicle, if possible.
* Put on PPE provided by the LTCOP as shown in the approved training. *At a minimum, this will include a disposable surgical mask or a cloth mask. Gowns are only necessary if you will have physical contact with items like bed rails or need to sit down in a chair.*

  [***Review the video from the CDC on donning PPE.***](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H4jQUBAlBrI&t=14s)* Use disinfecting wipes to clean your notepad and other items you will bring into the facility.

***NOTE:*** *Limit items to what is necessary for the visit such as your ID badge, pen, required paperwork, and your Sanitizer Kit.** Use hand sanitizer as instructed.

**PRECAUTIONARY STEPS DURING VISITS (Inside or Outside)*** Use hand sanitizer when hand washing is not readily available.
* Avoid touching your face, especially your eyes, nose, and mouth.
* Always keep your mask on.
* Avoid physical contact such as handshakes, fist bumps, or hugs.
* Try to maintain a six foot distance from residents, staff, and visitors.
* Do not share pens or other items. Bring pens that you can leave with the residents or staff.
* Do not set your notepad or other items on any surface.
* Avoid touching any surfaces, especially tabletops.
* Remain standing during the visit. Do not sit down on chairs.

**ADDITIONAL PRECAUTIONARY STEPS WHILE IN THE FACILITY*** Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds upon entering the facility, perform hand sanitizing between visits to each resident’s room, at departure, and as needed.
* Before entering a room with signage for infectious conditions, determine necessary contact precautions. Do not enter any rooms that are under contact precautions for aerosolized treatment or where you see a resident receiving breathing treatment (for example for asthma or COPD).
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| **LTCOP STAFF CONDUCTING FACILITY VISITS –**  ***AT THE FACILITY VISIT (CONTINUED)*** |
| **OMBUDSMAN WORK****COMMUNICATION TIPS*** Maintaining physical distance and wearing a mask may make it difficult for a resident to hear you clearly. If working with a resident who is hard of hearing or who reads lips, you may:
* Take off your mask if you use a face shield.
* Speak slower and with short sentences.
* Use a Pocket Talker or other voice amplifying device. Suggested steps:
1. Place the Pocket Talker on the ears of the resident.
2. Remove it when your conversation is over.
3. Sanitize the device after its use or place in a separate bag from your Sanitizer Kit.
* Maintain confidentiality of residents as much as possible.
* Plan to speak with more than one resident. *Practice normal routine for visiting with various residents.*

***NOTE:*** *Do not change your mask between visits with residents. If you touched any surface and/or were near a resident, wash your hands, use hand sanitizer if hand washing is not possible, and change your gloves if you are using them.***CONSENT TO INVESTIGATE, ACCESS RESIDENT RECORDS, AND/OR DISCLOSE CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION (*if conducting a complaint investigation*)**During COVID-19 pandemic visits, **oral consent,** documented contemporaneously, is acceptable in lieu of written consent. |

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| **LTCOP STAFF CONDUCTING FACILITY VISITS –**  ***AFTER THE FACILITY VISIT*** |
| Before you leave the designated area for outside visits or the building for inside visits, check with the facility to find out how and where they want you to dispose of PPE. 1. Remove all PPE and dispose as instructed by the facility. [***Review the video from the CDC on doffing PPE.***](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PQxOc13DxvQ)
2. Face shield

***NOTE:*** *If you used a face shield, remove the item and use disinfecting**wipes to clean the shield before placing it in the bag for reusable PPE.*b) Mask ***NOTE:*** *If you used a reusable mask, use preservation procedures as determined by the LTCOP office.* 1. Perform hand hygiene immediately upon removal of PPE.
2. Use disinfecting wipes to clean your notepad and other items you brought into the facility, including the bag containing your Sanitizer Kit. Place used wipes in the container identified above. Dispose of single use PPE at the facility.

 1. Use hand sanitizer again if you need to touch the door as you exit the facility.
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