

State health department restricts visitors at skilled nursing, assisted living, and intermediate care facilities

Denver (March 13, 2020): Per direction from Governor Polis, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) is restricting all visitors at skilled nursing, assisted living, and intermediate care facilities to protect the health of the residents and health care workers at those facilities. These facilities provide care to older Coloradans with underlying health conditions.

While 80 percent of COVID-19 cases are mild, the populations in these facilities are at higher risk of getting severe novel coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) and have higher fatality rates. The department is doing everything possible to protect the public's health by putting measures in place to slow and limit the spread of COVID-19 in these facilities.

"We all have a responsibility to protect the most vulnerable among us from contracting COVID-19," **said Governor Jared Polis**. "It starts with staying isolated even if your symptoms are mild. We are all in this together, and we all have people we love who are particularly vulnerable — our parents, our grandparents, our aunts and uncles."

"We have learned a lot from other states where COVID first appeared, and are taking this step because we believe it's necessary to lessen the possibility of exposure to people living in these facilities," **said Jill Hunsaker Ryan**, executive director of CDPHE. "We will continue to exercise every precaution necessary to protect those who are vulnerable. We all play a role in slowing and limiting the spread of this virus."

The order requires:

- These facilities are required to offer alternative communication methods for people who would otherwise visit the residents by using virtual communication tools and providing staff to assist the residents with those tools.
- Third-party visitors who are critical to the resident's care will be allowed to continue their services, with screening restrictions, to continue to provide the care, services, and supplies crucial to resident care. These include volunteers, vendors receiving supplies, agency staff, EMS personnel and equipment, transportation providers, and other practitioners.
- The order mandates facilities to document symptom screening for all individuals entering the building, and make the documentation available to the department upon request.
- In the event that the facility has a positive, or suspected positive case of COVID-19, the facility will keep records of visitation in order to prevent infection exposure to other residents.

"CDPHE is committed to protecting the health of our older Coloradans at these facilities while also protecting their rights to live a full and enriched life," **said Randy Kuykendall**, division director of Health Facilities and Emergency Medical Services Division at CDPHE. "It is important to note that at this time there have not been any confirmed cases of COVID-19 in these Colorado facilities. Public Health Order 20-20 is an important step to continue to protect the health and well-being of this vulnerable population."