

Health & Fitness

Cuomo suspends nursing home visits in midst of COVID-19 outbreak

By Kate Goldsmith

In his press conference last Thursday, Gov. Andrew Cuomo outlined new steps to prevent the spread of COVID-19, the disease caused by the novel coronavirus. One of the major initiatives, a ban on visitors to nursing homes, aims to protect those who are most vulnerable to the virus. Until further notice, only medically necessary visits will be allowed.

"We're putting additional requirements on nursing homes," said Cuomo. "All staff must wear masks. All staff must be monitored for symptoms as they're coming in. No non-medical staff, personnel, to enter a nursing home. This means no visitors in a nursing home, which sounds very difficult. But, look ... if you care about someone in a nursing home, the last thing you want is to endanger that person."

The state is also asking nursing homes to set up Skyping and other online communication capacity so families can tele-visit their loved ones. Additionally, the state will require health screenings for all nursing home workers each day when they enter a facility and require them to wear surgical masks to guard against any potential asymptomatic spread.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), those most at risk for serious illness from COVID-19 include older adults and people with serious chronic medical conditions like heart disease, diabetes and lung disease. Often, nursing home residents fall into both high-risk groups.

A report by the World Health Organization (WHO) classifies "older adults" as those over age 60, and adds cancer to the list of conditions putting individuals at higher risk for "severe disease and death." Cases of COVID-19 in people age 19 and younger seem to be "relatively rare and mild," according to WHO.

Facilities in the region are complying with state requirements.

"Resident safety is a top priority," said Brian Zeidan, administrator of adult day healthcare and pavilion at The Community at Brookmeade in Rhinebeck. "Every resident and family should have a clean, safe living environment. Brookmeade Community is in close contact with our local and state health departments, as well as the CDC, to stay up to date on the information to prevent and manage the spread of coronavirus."

Zeidan suggested that families can make use of technology to stay in touch during the visitor ban.

"Loved ones can communicate with residents by using video chat such as Skype or Facebook messenger, calling, texting or social media; and staff will work with families on how best to connect," he said. "Our population at Brookmeade is particularly vulnerable to this virus and we appreciate the assistance in ensuring our residents are cared for in a safe and healthy environment."

Zeidan added: "We have reviewed and updated our infection prevention and control plans and our emergency communication plan. We have also reinforced protocols, already in place before COVID, to our staff that anyone who is sick to stay home. We are following the recommended infection prevention procedures used during the flu season: handwashing, using alcohol-based hand sanitizers, covering coughs, and disinfecting the environment."

Sarah Colomello, spokeswoman for The Thompson House in Rhinebeck, said staff at the facility "has been collaborating with our Nuvance Health system's global health and infectious diseases specialists to perform around-the-clock assessments to identify risks to our residents. They are elderly and/or have medical conditions, and therefore are the most vulnerable."



Karen Zobel, CEO and Administrator at the Brookmeade Community in Rhinebeck, is pictured with a Meadows resident. Until further notice, only medically necessary visits are being permitted at nursing homes in the state.

-Courtesy photo

Colomello said The Thompson House is "updating several electronic devices to be HIPAA-compliant to connect residents with families members who cannot visit.

"In addition, we are training and re-training our staff on personal protective equipment, monitoring supplies and drilling for emergency situations with our seven-hospital system's support, including Northern Dutchess Hospital on our campus," she said. "Remaining vigilant is the best way to protect our residents."

Julie Primavera, RN BSN, is the regional vice president for sales & marketing for Wingate Health. Wingate has locations in southern Dutchess in Beacon and Fishkill.

"Each of Wingate Healthcare's communities are taking proactive approaches to keep our residents and staff safe; this is always our priority," said Primavera.

Primavera said that "Wingate has provided education and CDC fact sheets for the residents and families. We have implemented numerous preventative strategies in our communities, reviewed emergency preparedness plans and illness triage protocols." She also noted, "Wingate has 24-7 Infection Preventionist consultants on staff and able to provide resources as needed. As State associations, Department of Health and CDC recommendations are made, they are incorporated into our protocols and communications.

"We have extensive communication with the Department of Health, CDC and State Associations for updated information and provide daily contact with our teams in the communities," said Primavera.

Nuvance Health announces COVID-19 Temporary Visitation Policy

To continuously ensure a healthy and safe environment for patients and staff during the COVID-19 pandemic, no visitors are allowed at any Nuvance Health hospital or facility until further notice. Exceptions apply for:

- Active Labor and Delivery: Patient can have one (single) support person during labor and delivery

- Pediatric, NICU, and Nursery: Two parents/guardians per one patient per day

- Extenuating Circumstances: Patient's care team will discuss special circumstances with the patient and their

family/appropriate person(s). Extenuating circumstances may include: end-of-life care, life-threatening admission to the hospital, patient's inability to thrive without support person, legal guardian required, interpreter required, or support person required for transportation.

Additional information for visitors:

- COVID-19 Suspected or Confirmed Patient: Patients who are suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 will not be allowed any visitors.

- Screenings: All visitors will be subject

to an active screening for risk factors of COVID-19. Temperatures may be checked. Visitors should be prepared to answer questions about their recent travel history. Visitors showing signs of respiratory illness, such as cough, fever, or difficulty breathing/shortness of breath will be asked to go home.

- Visiting Hours: Visiting hours may change as this situation develops. Please call the hospital to confirm visiting hours before you come to the hospital.

Nuvance Health officials apologize for

any inconvenience this visitation policy may cause you and your family. This is a very important way to limit the risk of possible exposure to COVID-19 to you, your loved ones, and the community. We know that visitors and loved ones play an essential role as partners in healing and wellness. That's why this visitation policy will be reevaluated daily and removed as soon as conditions allow.

Visit nuvancehealth.org/coronavirus for the latest information.

Hydrant flushing in Fleetwood Water District in Wappinger March 18- 20

CAMO Pollution Control, Inc. will be flushing hydrants between the hours of 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. beginning Wednesday, March 18, through Friday, March 20 in the

Fleetwood Water District in the Town of Wappinger. Residents are advised to limit water use.

During the flushing, residents may experi-

ence erratic water pressure and turbid water conditions. This condition will only be temporary. At all times the water will meet satisfactory sanitary quality, according

to CAMO. The flushing will bring about long-term improvements in water quality.

If you have any questions, call CAMO Pollution Control, Inc. at 845-463-7310.



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