



## Compassionate Care Visits

Based on Updated Guidance from PA DOH dated 9.3.2020

### Background

On September 3, 2020, the PA Department of Health (DOH) released updated guidance related to “Compassionate Care” visits in skilled nursing facilities. This guidance has been made publicly accessible [here](#).

The updated guidance is meant to recognize the toll that separation during the COVID-19 pandemic has taken on loved ones, and allow a very limited number of residents who have experienced significant decline due to this separation, to receive visitors.

### Definitions

**Compassionate Care** refers to caregiver access necessitated to maintain or improve a resident’s health and well-being based on two or more documented “significant changes” in the resident’s care plan.

**Compassionate Caregiver** (or “Caregiver”) refers to a family member, friend, volunteer, or other individual identified by a resident, the resident’s family or facility staff to provide the resident with Compassionate Care.

### How does a resident qualify for a compassionate care visit?

The Department of Health has placed the responsibility for identifying and determining which residents qualify for a compassionate care visit in the hands of the facility, in this case Messiah Lifeways. They instruct that residents be evaluated to determine if, *“the effects of prolonged isolation [have had] such significant mental and emotional health impacts that a resident's physical health becomes impaired.”*

More specifically, **two or more documented “significant changes”** in a resident’s condition will qualify them for a compassionate care visit. **Significant Change** is defined as a major decline a resident's status that:

1. Will not normally resolve itself without intervention by staff or by implementing standard disease-related clinical interventions; the decline is not considered "self-limiting ...";
2. Impacts more than one area of the resident's health status; and
3. Requires interdisciplinary review and/or revision of the care plan.

### **How can I become an approved Compassionate Caregiver?**

- First, your loved one needs to qualify for Compassionate Care visits (see above).
- If your loved one qualifies, you will be contacted by one of Messiah Lifeways' social workers, who will discuss with you the following:
  - Who will be designated as the compassionate caregiver(s) -- no more than 2 individuals per resident
  - Frequency of visits -- based on each residents' care plan and the type of care that will be provided through these visits
  - Each Compassionate Caregiver must show proof of a negative COVID-19 test within 7 days (preferably 72 hours) of each visit
    - The first test should be arranged through your Primary Care Physician
    - Subsequent tests may be coordinated by Messiah Lifeways
  - The first visit will be supervised by a Messiah Lifeways team member who will provide guidance on current infection control procedures; if infection control standards are not followed during subsequent visits, these visits may be suspended

### **When will Messiah Lifeways begin allowing Compassionate Care visits?**

Our implementation timeline is as follows (dates subject to change in the event of COVID outbreak or other unforeseen challenge):

Week of 9/14 -- Messiah Lifeways team will evaluate each resident to determine if criteria to qualify for Compassionate Care visits is met

Week of 9/21 -- Messiah Lifeways team will contact family members of those residents that qualify for Compassionate Care visits

Week of 9/28 -- Compassionate Caregivers begin visits

We will continue to evaluate residents on an ongoing basis to determine if additional individuals qualify for Compassionate Care visits.

### **What if my loved one does not qualify for Compassionate Care visits?**

We understand how difficult this time apart from your loved one has been, and we know that the limited visits through Connection Booths are in no way ideal. Messiah Lifeways is committed to keeping your loved one safe and well-cared for, and we join you in hoping and praying that this difficult season will soon come to an end. If you have questions or are dissatisfied with the regulations described above, please feel free to reach out to the PA Department of Health directly.