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Nursing Home and Assisted Living Breaking News: Revised DHS Guidance for Visitation

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Practice Area: Health Law & Long Term Care/Assisted Living

Earlier today the Wisconsin Department of Health Services ("DHS") released newly revised guidance for long term care facilities (nursing homes) and assisted living facilities. Significantly, DHS's new guidance prohibits **ALL** visitation to long term care and assisted living facilities including visitors and non-essential health care personnel with the following limited exceptions:

- Certain compassionate care situations, such as an end-of-life situations, on a case-by-case basis;
- Health care workers that provide care to residents; and
- DHS Surveyors.

The guidance also explicitly requires facilities to screen both staff and visitors for signs of infection including screening for fever or respiratory symptoms. Facilities must screen even employees before the start of each shift, actively taking their temperature and documenting symptoms if present. In allowing visitors for compassionate care situations, facilities must not allow anyone exhibiting signs of infection to enter the facility. Further, facilities must require visitors use proper hand hygiene and wear personal protective equipment such as masks. The memorandum also maintains elements of prior guidance including cancelling all communal resident activities and asking visitors to self-monitor and report symptoms that arise after exiting the facility.

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