



Long-Term Care Regulatory Provider Letter

Number: PL 20-57 (Revised)
Title: HHSC Guidance to Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Program Providers and ICF/IID Facilities Regarding Tours for Prospective Residents/Individuals
Provider Types: HCS and ICF/IID Providers
Date Issued: April 15, 2021

1.0 Subject and Purpose

As part of the continued reopening of the State of Texas, the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) is issuing the following guidance to providers to reduce the risk of spreading the coronavirus to individuals served while allowing persons to **tour a prospective residence or facility in a** community setting.

2.0 Policy Details & Provider Responsibilities

2.1 Tours

HHSC recommends that individuals participate in virtual facility or residence tours whenever possible. However, a provider can provide a combination of virtual and in-person tours if **it meets two conditions. First, the provider must ensure** appropriate transmission-based precautions are taken for each tour. **Second, the provider must have either:**

- offered a complete series of a one-or two-dose COVID-19 vaccine to individuals and staff and documented each individual's choice to vaccinate or not, or
- been approved by HHSC for visitation despite not have offered the vaccine.

Precautions include the use of personal protective equipment (PPE)¹ to be worn by staff conducting the tour and the persons touring the residence or facility. The provider must schedule the tour **in advance**. Provider staff also must accompany the tour at all times.

The provider must screen **all** persons touring the facility or residence for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and maintain a log containing the name of each person screened, the date and time of the screening, and the results of the screening. **Providers must prohibit any persons who do not pass screening from touring**. The screening log can contain protected health information and must be protected in accordance with applicable state and federal law.² The provider must **describe** infection control precautions and ensure the prospective resident/individual and **any** persons who **accompanies him or her** remain physically distanced from **other persons in the residence or facility**.

2.2 Communal Areas

HHSC recommends that communal areas be included in the virtual tour **and not an in-person tour**. However, if communal areas are visited in-person, areas should be clear of current residents/individuals, if possible, and be disinfected before and after each in-person tour. Whenever possible, the provider should conduct tours of areas without residents/individuals **in them to limit the possibility of contamination**. For example, a room at the end of a hallway could be used to show a prospective resident or individual a model room while current residents/individuals are gathered in the kitchen area. Tours must be scheduled at times that do not inconvenience current residents/individuals. The provider also can choose to restrict tours to certain areas of the home based on occupancy and the need to maintain transmission-based precautions.

¹ See 26 Texas Administrative Code §§551.47(f)(5)(F) and 551.47(g)(8)(E) for ICF/IID and 40 TAC §9.198(e)(5) for HCS.

² See 26 TAC §551.47(b) for ICF/IID and 40 TAC §9.198(c) for HCS.

3.0 Background/History

During the COVID-19 pandemic, individuals can continue to **tour a prospective residence or facility in a community setting, including transferring from an SSLC**. Providers and **staff from a prospective residence or facility, including** SSLC staff, should work together to ensure that the individual and his or her legally authorized representative (if applicable) make the best decision possible for the individual and that the facility or residence tour is safe for both current and prospective residents/individuals.

4.0 Resources

[26 TAC §551.46 ICF/IID Provider Response to COVID-19 – Mitigation.](#)

[26 TAC §551.47 Intermediate Care Facility COVID-19 Response -Expansion of Reopening Visitation.](#)

[40 TAC §9.198 Program Provider Response to COVID-19 Emergency Rule.](#)

Contact Information

If you have any questions about this letter, please contact the Policy and Rules Section by email at LTCRPolicy@hhs.texas.gov or call (512) 438-3161.