



March 17, 2021

To Our Residents, and their Families and Friends,

Federal and State health officials recently relaxed the government's guidelines for seeing nursing home residents in person by appointment, saying that vaccinations and a slowing of coronavirus infections in facilities warrant the change. This guidance, the first federal advice on the subject since September, still states that visitors must adhere to the Core Principles of COVID-19 Infection Prevention and that 'outdoor visitation is preferred,' even when a nursing home resident and family or friend are fully vaccinated against COVID-19. However, acknowledging that weather or a resident's poor health might make an outdoor visit impractical, the advice permits additional indoor visits.

The safest approach, particularly if either party has not been fully vaccinated*, is for residents and their visitors to maintain physical distancing of at least 6 feet. If the resident is fully vaccinated, the resident can choose to have close contact (including touch) if both visitor and resident keep on their masks. Regardless of vaccine status, visitors must successfully pass screening guidelines, physically distance from other residents and staff, practice hand hygiene, and wear masks. Residents under isolation or quarantine protocols will have further visitation restrictions**.

Despite the relaxed restrictions, our goal remains focused on safety. We realize how important in-person visitation can be. Our dedicated staff members have done an extraordinary job filling in for loved ones and adapting visitations during this difficult time, but nothing can replace engaging with family members in person. While we analyze visitation protocols under the new guidance and assess ways to schedule in-person visitation please know that we will continue to offer our main lobby window visits (with or without assistance) for residents who are not under isolation or quarantine protocols, and virtual visits via FaceTime, Google Duo, Skype, and Zoom for all residents. We suggest utilizing all options available to you to visit with your loved one. To learn more or to schedule an appointment for an in-person, window, or virtual visit, call 919-286-7705 in Durham, or 919-781-4900 in Raleigh.

We remain hopeful these vaccines will continue to prove effective and allow us to open back up as before. You can support efforts to meet this goal, by promoting the vaccine and by receiving the vaccine as soon as you are eligible and have access. You can find a list of hospital and health department vaccine resources at <https://covid19.ncdhhs.gov/findyourspot>.

Please reach out to us directly if you have any questions. We will continue to take steps available to us to protect your loved ones and help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Sincerely,

Ted Smith, Administrator
Hillcrest Durham

Lisa Lee, Administrator
Hillcrest Raleigh

*Fully vaccinated refers to a person who is ≥ 2 weeks following receipt of the second dose in a 2-dose series, or ≥ 2 weeks following receipt of one dose of a single dose (Johnson & Johnson).

**Exception: Compassionate Care visits can be coordinated up to 7 days a week consistent with each resident's situation (end-of-life visits are one example). To assess clinical circumstances and resident's condition, please coordinate with the Director of Nursing or the RN Supervisor.