



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
**DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING &
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

Charles D. Baker, Governor ◆ Karyn E. Polito, Lieutenant Governor ◆ Jennifer D. Maddox, Undersecretary

To: All Private Affordable Housing Owners and Managers
From: Catherine Racer, Associate Director, Division of Housing Development
Subject: Limiting Visitors to Multi-Unit Developments During the COVID-19 Emergency
Date: April 2, 2020

Many residents will be relying on family, friends, and service providers to help them through this challenging time. It will be important for property managers to monitor, to the best of their ability, visitation, and for owners and managers to put in place *reasonable* restrictions on visitation so long as residents continue to receive critical nutritional and medical assistance.

- 1) Limiting or Restricting Visitors. Owners are encouraged to work with their local board of health to discuss an order to restrict visitors, particularly in properties serving elderly households and/or persons with disabilities who may be particularly at risk of complications from COVID-19. Please note:
 - a) Particularly in developments serving elderly residents and/or persons with disabilities, residents may depend on outside services for basic needs. In all circumstances, an owner must ensure that critical nutritional and medical services and essential assistance with activities of daily living such as bathing, dressing, eating and toileting continue for residents. Essential visitors may include personal care attendants, “meals on wheels” programs, and family members serving as caregivers providing such nutritional and medical services. Owners cannot simply lock all doors and bar all visitors unless all essential services are being provided to all residents in need on-site through the owner.
 - b) DHCD urges owners, when raising these issues with their local board of health, to discuss both an order to limit visitation as described above and alternative measures they may need to put in place for residents to receive critical nutritional and medical services and essential assistance with activities of daily living.
 - c) DHCD also urges owners of developments serving elderly residents to contact their local Aging Service Access Point (ASAP) provider for guidance. To identify your local ASAP, click on <https://contactus.800ageinfo.com/FindAgency.aspx>. Also, please see attached ASAP contact spreadsheet circulated by the Executive Office of Elder Affairs.
 - d) DHCD also urges owners to:
 - i) Ask residents to provide a list of service providers and caregivers on whom they depend for critical nutritional and medical services and essential assistance with activities of daily living;
 - ii) Contact those service providers and caregivers to direct them, wherever feasible, towards remote communications with residents; and

iii) Where feasible, explore means of providing essential services without having visitors physically enter the building (for example, having food, meals or medicines dropped off in the lobby and delivered to residents' apartments by owner/manager staff rather than by visitors)

- e) Owners may wish to consider alternative means of assisting residents to maintain contact with family members who provide emotional support and connection, such as:
- i) Providing, and instructing residents in the use of, tablet computers or other technology to enable them to communicate with family through video calling.
Note: Owners should NOT encourage sharing of devices that have not been properly sterilized
 - ii) Where feasible, encouraging residents to meet visitors outside, provided that they are able to maintain appropriate social distance of at least 6'
 - iii) Guiding visitors to exterior areas where they may be able to see and talk to residents through open windows, or with cell phone through closed windows. It is important to make sure terrain is safe at any windows designated for this purpose.

2) Protective Measures for Essential Visitors

- a) Wherever feasible, owners/managers should create a log system that will enable future contact tracing through the Department of Public Health, in the event a resident, staff or visitor tests positive for COVID-19. This may only be possible in larger developments, and we understand that with skeleton staffing any logging will likely be voluntary.
- b) To the extent feasible given staffing and the physical configuration of their properties, owners may want to consider doing non-invasive health screening for ALL visitors, including essential visitors, to limit access by persons who have been diagnosed with or are exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 or have recently been exposed to a person quarantined for, diagnosed with or exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19. Owners who elect to perform such screening must do so in a well-documented, impartial, and non-invasive manner.
- c) Owners should assure, to the extent feasible, that before entering all visitors are educated on proper hygiene and social distancing practices and signing into visitor logs.
- d) Wherever feasible, owners should install handwashing stations and/or sanitizer stations at common lobbies that serve multiple housing units and require visitors to utilize such stations before entering any other portion of the building

3) Signage:

- a) DHCD recommends putting up visible signage that encourages proper handwashing and strongly discourages non-essential visitors, especially those who are showing cold or flu-like symptoms. Appropriate signage should be posted throughout the development in common areas, lobbies, elevators, and hallways.
- b) Owners should remember to evaluate the need for translating signage into different languages, as appropriate to the resident population. COVID-19 signs in a variety of languages can be found at this link: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-printable-fact-sheets#prevention->

4) Other Protective Measures:

- a) Owners should have (and generally have) canceled all scheduled events.
- b) Common touch points at entries and common areas should be routinely cleaned with a product sufficient to kill the COVID-19 virus. Consider closing or restricting use of all common areas

and/or implementing a sign-up system for use of essential common spaces, such as laundry or fitness areas.

- c) If residents are not compliant with social-distancing order, owners may consider removing or rearranging furniture in common areas to promote social distancing.
- d) Owners should also discourage, as far as possible, group transportation for residents to locations other than grocery stores, pharmacies, and medical appointments to avoid opportunities for transmission.
- e) DHCD recommends that Owners explore and encourage residents to use alternative means (to the extent available in their community) for residents to obtain groceries, medicines and medical care that will minimize the need for residents to physically go to locations where they may be exposed to transmission. These may include:
 - i) Shopping and delivery services for groceries;
 - ii) Mail order pharmacies and/or delivery service from existing pharmaceutical provider; and
 - iii) Telehealth services from existing medical providers.