



Patricia M. Ross
Commissioner

Georgia Department of Veterans Service

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Administration

Department Directive 21.200

SUBJECT: Access Control Procedures for Visitors to the Georgia Veterans War Homes

OFFICE OF PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY: Commissioner of Veterans Service

PURPOSE:

1. To establish a uniform, legally compliant process governing access to the Georgia War Veterans Home (GWVH) by non-family visitors, organizations, and delegations, while safeguarding resident rights, privacy, safety, and uninterrupted clinical operations, consistent with applicable federal and state law and accepted skilled nursing facility standards.

AUTHORITY AND REGULATORY REFERENCES:

2. This policy is issued under the authority of the Georgia Department of Veterans Service (GDVS) and is governed by, and shall be interpreted in a manner consistent with, the following:
 - Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
 - 42 C.F.R. Part 483 – Requirements for Long-Term Care Facilities
 - §483.10 – Resident Rights
 - §483.12 – Freedom from Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation
 - §483.15 – Quality of Life
 - §483.70 – Administration
 - U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
 - 38 U.S. C. Part 17 - Medical
 - §17.33 – Patient's Rights (c)
 - Applicable state licensure and privacy laws, including resident confidentiality and facility security requirements.

SCOPE:

3. This policy does not apply to immediate family members or individuals expressly invited by a resident with decision-making capacity, or their a duly authorized representative, subject to applicable health, safety, and operational limitations.

POLICY STATEMENT:

4. GWVH recognizes and respects residents' rights to visitation as required by Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs standards. At the same time, the facility has a legal and operational obligation to regulate non-family and organizational access to ensure resident privacy, safety, infection control, and continuity of care. Accordingly, non-family visitation is subject to prior administrative approval.

DEFINITIONS:

5. **Immediate Family:** Individuals recognized as family members under Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs resident rights guidance.
6. **Non-Family Visitor:** Any individual, organization, or group not qualifying as immediate family or not expressly invited by a resident with capacity, or their a duly authorized representative.
7. **Office of the Commissioner:** The Office of the Commissioner, Georgia Department of Veterans Service, or designee.

POLICY REQUIREMENTS:

8. Prior Approval.

Any visitor, organization, or delegation that is not an immediate family member or expressly approved by a current resident with decision-making capacity, or their a duly authorized representative, must obtain prior written approval from the Office of the Commissioner or their designee before arriving on the GWVH campus. This requirement is consistent with CMS-authorized facility administration and does not restrict resident rights under 42 C.F.R. §483.10.

9. Request Process.

- Requests for non-family visitation must be submitted no fewer than five (5) business days in advance, unless otherwise authorized by the Office of the Commissioner due to operational necessity or exigent circumstances.
- Requests must include:
 - Full names of all proposed visitors
 - Organizational affiliation, if applicable
 - Purpose and scope of the visit
 - Requested date, time, and anticipated duration
 - Any requested accommodation or special access

Requests that are incomplete or inconsistent with regulatory requirements may be denied or returned for clarification.

10. Review and Vetting.

All requests are subject to administrative review to ensure compliance with:

- Resident privacy and confidentiality protections
- Infection prevention and control standards
- Facility security requirements
- VA oversight obligations
- Operational capacity and clinical care priorities

Approval may be granted, denied, modified, or conditioned, including but not limited to restrictions on time, location, group size, escort requirements, or access to resident care areas.

11. Unscheduled or Unauthorized Visitors.

Individuals or groups arriving on site without prior approval may be:

- Denied entry, or
- Directed to submit a formal request for future consideration

This provision applies uniformly and is necessary to maintain compliance with CMS and VA standards.

12. Staff Responsibilities.

- All staff receiving inquiries or requests for non-family visitation shall refer such requests to the Office of the Commissioner.
- No staff member is authorized to independently approve non-family visits, regardless of position or tenure.
- Staff are responsible for enforcing this policy consistently, professionally, and without discrimination.

RESIDENT RIGHTS:

13. Nothing in this policy shall be construed to limit or infringe upon a resident's right to receive visitors of their choosing, provided:

- The resident has decision-making capacity or appropriate authorization exists; and
- The visit does not compromise the health, safety, or rights of other residents or facility operations.

NEUTRAL APPLICATION

14. This policy shall be applied uniformly and without regard to viewpoint, advocacy position, organizational affiliation, or political status. Decisions are based solely on regulatory compliance, resident welfare, and operational considerations.

ENFORCEMENT:

15. Failure to comply with this policy may result in denial of access, removal from the premises, or other administrative action as permitted by law.

COMMISSIONER

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. M. Ross', written in a cursive style.

PATRICIA M. ROSS