

Conducting on-site research in nursing homes requires consideration of logistics and activities in advance of, during, and after the visit. This document provides a brief overview of some of those considerations.

BEFORE YOU GO

- Coordinate your visit with the nursing home contact person and finalize logistics
 - Verify a key contact person at the nursing home for communication about visits and other arrangements; provide your mobile telephone number so the contact person can communicate last-minute changes to scheduled visits.
 - Ask about ID badge requirements (such as a photo ID), and policies related to vaccinations (e.g., COVID or flu), testing (e.g., tuberculosis), or masking.
 - If a laptop or iPad is required to enter data, confirm that data can be entered offline or that the nursing home has sufficient Wi-Fi that you can access in the necessary location; ask about the Wi-Fi password in advance.
 - In the event of challenges, you may want to bring a personal hotspot as backup.
 - If you plan to bring food for the nursing home staff, assure it is allowable and inquire if there are any common dietary restrictions.
- If language differences or hearing challenges are anticipated, plan for them in advance
 - Adapt materials for those who speak primary languages other than English; if necessary, bring an interpreter to the visit.
 - Because many residents have hearing difficulties, consider bringing a Pocket Talker to facilitate communication.
- Confirm your visit in advance
 - Call or email ahead of time to remind the contact person about your visit.
 - Mention the date, time, duration, and purpose of your visit; how many people will be visiting; with whom you'll meet (e.g., staff, residents, families); and assistance you may need such as space, providing refreshments, or transferring residents.
 - If the contact person indicates that state representatives may be visiting during that time as part of an inspection, offer to reschedule the visit.
 - If you will be driving a car issued by your state, inform the contact person so they know you are driving it (rather than it being driven by a state representative).
 - Ask about activities that may affect residents' availability on the day of your visit.

DURING YOUR VISIT

- Attend to your professional appearance and personal needs
 - Business casual attire is standard, including not wearing shorts or casual open-toed shoes.
 - Introduce yourself to staff upon arrival; if indicated, wear your photo ID at all times.
 - Ask about basic necessities such as the location of a restroom and space to eat your lunch and store your belongings.
 - Limit your telephone use to emergencies and when in a private location; ask about cell phone use protocols because many nursing homes do not have strong cellular or Wi-Fi service.

- Be mindful of communication and sensitive to individual differences
 - Confirm with the charge nurse or supervisor that it is appropriate to meet with the residents with whom you plan to interact that day; ask about their cognitive, hearing, and visual abilities.
 - Be responsive to the needs of individuals with different abilities; determine if there are assistive devices such as hearing aids or glasses to support the interaction. Consider bringing a Pocket Talker because many residents may have difficulty hearing.
 - Some residents with dementia may live in a secured/locked unit; ask staff how to enter and exit, and before entering, ask about policies related to interacting with residents.
 - Older adults and others may require more time to think and respond; allow enough time to present information at the resident's preferred pace. Consider conducting data collection over multiple time points to minimize resident fatigue.
 - You are in the residents' home and the staff's workspace; treat them with respect and dignity.
 - Because you do not know these individuals, do not touch them unless invited to do so.
 - Always knock on closed doors, identify yourself, and ask permission to enter; when you leave, ask if the door should be closed.
 - Always wash hands or use hand sanitizer between visiting residents and rooms.

- Plan for and explain use of a laptop or other technology for data collection
 - Explain the need for a computer use at the start of each visit; be prepared to enter data in paper format if necessary.
 - If it is consistent with the research protocol, having a large font self-administered questionnaire available may be advantageous for residents with hearing difficulty who are able to complete a questionnaire.

- Be able to respond in special situations: frequently asked questions (FAQs) and answers
 - What if a resident asks to use the toilet or has other care needs that require assistance?
 - Locate a nearby staff member to provide assistance.
 - What if there is a flu or other infectious disease outbreak in the nursing home?
 - Always check with the contact person prior to traveling to and entering the nursing home. If there is an outbreak, you might reschedule the visit unless the outbreak is contained.
 - What if a resident tells you they want to make a complaint about the nursing home?
 - Provide information about how residents may file an official complaint by referring them to the posted Resident Bill of Rights.
 - What if you are concerned about a resident's well-being, such as hearing suicidal thoughts?
 - Bring your observations and concerns to the supervisor/charge nurse or contact person.
 - Be aware of how to respond to suspected mistreatment or neglect based on training you received or have available at your institution.

AFTER YOUR VISIT

- Express appreciation for your visit
 - Send a thank you note or email to the nursing home contact, and if possible, to the residents and staff members who spoke with you; include updates and next steps, such as about your next visit. NEXT STEPs provides [sample materials](#) that may be useful for these purposes.
 - Communicate the results of your research to the nursing home and participants; offer to schedule a time to do so in person.