

What to Do if a Nursing Home Won't Let You Visit a Resident in Georgia

Decatur nursing home abuse lawyer explains what families need to know

When you place your loved one in a nursing home, you trust that they'll be cared for, treated with respect, and allowed to stay connected to their family. But what happens when the nursing home refuses to let you visit?

This situation can be frightening and frustrating. It's also often a warning sign of [nursing home abuse and neglect](#). When nursing homes restrict access and refuse to allow friends or family members to visit residents, it's often because the facility has something to hide.

When this happens, it's critical that family members take action right away. Otherwise, the abuse or neglect might continue and make matters worse. What many people might not realize is you have legal rights when it comes to visiting your loved one in a nursing home in Georgia. The experienced nursing home abuse and neglect attorneys at [Johnson Greer Law Group](#) explain what families need to know.

Can nursing homes in Georgia prevent people from visiting?

The short answer? Yes and no. In Georgia, nursing homes generally cannot prevent visitors altogether, but they can impose reasonable restrictions based on health, safety, or resident well-being.

According to federal law – specifically the [Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services \(CMS\)](#) guidelines under the Federal Nursing Home Reform Act (FNHRA) – nursing home residents have the right to receive visitors of their choosing at any time, as long as it doesn't infringe on the rights of others.

However, nursing homes may limit or restrict visitation in the following situations:

- Infection control concerns (flu outbreaks or pandemics like COVID-19)
- Resident's expressed preferences (if the resident doesn't want the visitor)
- Court orders or legal restrictions
- Threats to resident safety or facility operations
- Violation of facility rules (for example, bringing contraband, disruptive behavior)

Georgia also adopted CMS's updated visitation rules in November 2021, which require nursing homes to allow indoor visitation at all times for all residents, regardless of vaccination status, with very limited exceptions.

What are common excuses nursing homes use for preventing visitors?

There are only a few limited situations when a nursing home may restrict or delay visits. These are usually based on medical concerns or safety risks. But when a facility oversteps or gives vague excuses, it may be a sign that something's wrong.

Common (but not always legal) reasons given for restricting visits include:

- "Your visit will upset the resident."
- "We're short-staffed today."
- "It's not a good time."
- "They're in a behavioral unit now, so visits are limited."

While there are valid safety concerns in some cases, such as during a public health emergency, the facility must follow strict rules. Blanket bans on visitation or repeated excuses can't be used to cut off a resident from their loved ones, especially if the real reason is to cover up poor care, unsanitary conditions, or injuries due to abuse.

Do I have a legal right to visit my loved one?

Yes. Federal and state laws in Georgia protect your right to see and spend time with your loved one in a nursing home. Under the Federal Nursing Home Reform Act, residents have the right to:

- Be visited by family, friends, legal representatives or others of their choosing.
- Have visits take place at times convenient for them, without unnecessary limits, 24 hours a day.
- Receive care in a way that does not isolate them or cut them off from the outside world.

Georgia law supports these same rights and goes a step further by outlining specific visitation protections for family members and guardians. Nursing homes must allow reasonable access to residents, especially if you're a spouse, child or court-appointed decision-maker.

In addition, the "place of visitation shall be any place of the resident's choice so long as it does not disrupt the normal operation of the facility or disturb the other residents," according to [Georgia's Long Term Care Facilities: Residents' Bill of Rights](#).

Unless there's an immediate health risk or a documented reason for limiting contact, the nursing home can't block you from seeing your loved one.

Are blocked visits a sign of nursing home abuse or neglect?

Yes. One of the most common tactics used by nursing homes to cover up abuse or neglect is limiting outside access to residents. This can include:

- Cancelling visits last-minute
- Making visiting hours short and difficult
- Claiming the resident is "not feeling well" every time you come

- Refusing phone or video calls
- Moving the resident to a private area without notice

Other warning signs of nursing abuse and neglect include:

- Sudden weight loss or changes in appearance
- Visible bruises, sores, or untreated injuries
- Changes in mood or personality
- Fearful or withdrawn behavior
- Staff avoiding eye contact or becoming defensive

You know your loved one better than anyone. If something feels off – the nursing home repeatedly refuses to let you visit your loved one – trust your instincts. Make the call to our Georgia nursing home abuse law firm. We can help you every step of the way.

What should I do if a nursing home denies my visitation rights?

If a Georgia nursing home is denying your right to visit a loved one – and you suspect it's because they're hiding abuse or neglect – don't ignore it. Facilities are required by federal and state law to allow reasonable visitation. If they're keeping you away, there may be a serious reason. Here's what you can do:

- **Ask for the reason in writing.** Request a written explanation from the facility detailing why your visitation is being denied. A legitimate facility should be transparent and able to cite specific policies or health-based concerns.
- **Review the facility's visitation policy.** Check the nursing home's rules to see if their visitation restrictions align with Georgia and federal laws. Facilities often cite policies that actually violate state or federal laws.
- **Talk directly to your loved one.** If possible, try to call or video chat with your family member to assess their well-being. Watch for signs of distress, confusion or coaching.
- **Look for hidden abuse warning signs.** Unexplained injuries, rapid weight loss, confusion, fearfulness, or evasive staff are all warning signs that abuse or neglect could be happening behind closed doors.
- **Document everything.** Keep detailed notes of dates, times, names of staff, denied attempts to visit, and any conversations or written communications. Take photos of signs or notices if they appear to restrict access. The more details, the better.
- **Ask for a care plan meeting.** Federal regulations require regular care plan meetings with family involvement. If you've been excluded, that's a red flag. Demand a care plan meeting in writing. That way, there's a written record of your request.

- **Call the police.** This might seem like a drastic measure but you need to act fast, especially if you believe your loved one is in imminent danger. Your loved one's well-being must come first. And by calling the police, you can get the ball rolling and get in touch with the proper authorities who specifically handle nursing home abuse and neglect cases.
- **File a complaint with Georgia's Long-Term Care Ombudsman.** This office investigates concerns on behalf of nursing home residents and their families. You can call them at (866) 552-4464, visit the [Long-Term Care Ombudsman website](#), or simply contact our law firm. We can work with you and contact the state agency on your behalf.
- **Report the facility to the Georgia Department of Community Health (DCH).** DCH licenses and regulates nursing homes. You can file a complaint via the [DCH's online portal](#) or call (800) 878-6442 to report suspected nursing home abuse or neglect.
- **Reach out to Adult Protective Services (APS).** If you believe your loved one is in immediate danger, contact APS through the [Georgia Department of Human Services Division of Aging Services](#) or call (866) 552-4464.
- **Contact a lawyer.** Many nursing homes block visitation to avoid exposing abuse or to cover up serious neglect. A skilled Georgia nursing home abuse attorney can demand access, launch an investigation and hold the facility accountable for its actions under Georgia law.

Don't let a Georgia nursing home dictate whether or not you can visit a loved one. You have rights and legal options.

How do I file a complaint in Georgia about not being allowed to visit a nursing home?

If the nursing home refuses to allow you to visit a loved one in a nursing home in Georgia, you can and should report such abuse and the facility's actions (or inaction) to the state. The state agencies you can contact include:

- **Georgia Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program**
(866) 552-4464
www.georgiaombudsman.org
- **Georgia Department of Community Health (DCH)**
(800) 878-6442
www.dch.georgia.gov
- **Georgia Department of Human Services Division of Aging Services**
(866) 552-4464.
<https://aging.georgia.gov/>

You can also call 911 in case of an emergency.

Can I take legal action if the nursing home still won't allow visits?

Yes. If your rights or your loved one's rights have been violated, you may be able to file a civil lawsuit against the nursing home. If you plan to pursue this legal route, you should contact an experienced Georgia nursing home abuse attorney. A lawyer can help you:

- Demand immediate access to your loved one
- Get a court order if needed to enforce visitation rights
- Investigate suspected abuse or neglect
- Hold the nursing home accountable
- Pursue compensation on your family's behalf

Learn how a Georgia nursing home abuse lawyer can help you

You should be able to visit your parents, siblings or other loved ones who live in a nursing home. When nursing homes take away that right, don't take their actions at face value. Fight back and find out exactly why you can't see your loved one. Hire a Georgia nursing home abuse attorney who can help you hold them accountable.

At Johnson Greer Law Group, we help families in Atlanta and across Georgia demand answers, especially when nursing homes seem to have nothing but excuses. Our legal team has years of experience dealing with complex legal cases involving nursing home abuse, neglect and rights violations.

Get the law firm that demands justice for families in Georgia. [Contact us](#) and schedule your free, confidential consultation. You can explain to us what's going on and we can explain your available legal options. That way, you can make informed decisions based on the facts.

Your loved one has the right to see you – and you have the right to know they're safe. Let our team help you protect that bond and fight for the care they deserve.

"I first met Mr. Johnson during one of the most challenging times of my life – the passing of my father. Grieving and uncertain about the next steps, I sought guidance and prayed for clarity. ... From our first meeting, Mr. Johnson's professionalism, integrity, honesty, and compassion were evident. ... I am truly grateful for the dedication and expertise of The Johnson & Greer Group. Their unwavering support made all the difference, and I wholeheartedly recommend them to anyone facing a similar situation."

– Anthony E. H., ☆☆☆☆☆