



Veterans Homes Pre-Visit Guide

Thank you for taking the time to visit one of Oklahoma's Veterans Homes.

These facilities are first and foremost **the residents' homes**. Your visit is important and appreciated, and this guide is intended to help you prepare for what you may see and experience so your time on site is productive, respectful, and grounded in the reality of long-term care operations.

What to Expect When You Visit

Veterans Homes are **clinical care environments** as well as residential communities. During your visit, you may encounter:

- **Residents with varying levels of medical and cognitive need.**
Some residents are independent and social. Others may be living with dementia, traumatic brain injury, PTSD, mobility limitations, or chronic illness.
- **Medical and caregiving activity in real time.**
You may see nurses administering medications, staff assisting residents with mobility, hygiene, or meals, and therapists conducting rehabilitation sessions.
- **Appropriate Amenity Access.**
Resident amenities are arranged with resident safety as the top priority. Due to safety considerations, residents must receive assistance when handling hot beverages, and microwaves or hot plates are not permitted in resident rooms.
- **Residents in vulnerable moments.**
You may observe residents who are confused, emotional, or in physical distress. These moments are part of daily care in a skilled nursing environment and reflect the complexity of the population being served.
- **A busy, operational environment.**
Staff are balancing clinical care, safety protocols, documentation requirements, regulatory compliance, and resident quality of life—all at the same time.

Important Context

A Veterans Home is not a hospital, but it is also not a typical residential facility. It is a **regulated healthcare setting** operating 24/7 with staffing requirements, infection control protocols, privacy laws, and clinical standards. *The environment you see represents the real conditions under which staff provide care every day.*

Courtesies for Visitors

Your presence matters. The way visitors move through the building can either support a calm, safe environment—or unintentionally create disruption. A few practical considerations:



- **Be mindful of residents with dementia or cognitive impairment.**
Sudden movements, loud voices, or unexpected interactions can be confusing or distressing.
- **Use lids on beverages.**
Many residents have involuntary movements or impaired coordination. Open cups increase spill risk and create safety hazards.
- **Do not move or reposition residents or equipment.**
Even small adjustments can pose fall risks or interfere with medical care plans.
- **Respect personal space.**
Some residents welcome conversation; others may not. Staff can guide appropriate interaction.
- **Avoid interrupting care.**
If a staff member is assisting a resident, administering medication, or responding to a call light, allow them to complete that task before engaging.
- **Follow infection control guidance.**
Hand hygiene, visitor restrictions, and PPE protocols may be in place depending on current conditions.

Privacy and Dignity

Residents are entitled to dignity and privacy under state and federal law.

- **Do not photograph or record residents** without explicit permission and coordination with staff.
- **Avoid discussing individual residents publicly.**
- **Assume that every resident interaction is a private healthcare moment.**

How to Frame What You See

Not every observation during a visit represents a systemic issue. Long-term care environments involve:

- High-acuity medical needs
- Behavioral health challenges
- Staffing complexity
- Regulatory and documentation requirements
- Emotional labor for frontline staff

Your visit provides valuable perspective, but it captures only a snapshot of a 24-hour operation serving vulnerable veterans with complex needs.

Why Your Visit Matters

Your engagement helps leadership, policymakers, and partners better understand:

- The operational realities of Veterans Homes
- The human impact of policy, funding, and regulatory decisions
- The complexity of caring for aging veterans with clinical and behavioral health needs

Seeing the environment firsthand adds important context to reports, metrics, and briefings.