

Department Infection Control	Policy Number ICM-05-012
Category 05 Outbreak Management	Issuing Authority Elizabeth Bryce
Subject Covid 19 Visits During Pandemic	Effective Date: November 13, 2023
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PURPOSE:

To ensure a safe environment and provide guidance on how visitors can continue to have access to the Home even during an outbreak or a pandemic that follows the COVID-19 response measures for long-term care homes and the Act, O. Reg 246/22 and the Fixing Long Term Care Act, 2021 and in addition to all other applicable laws.

The policy considers balance and meets the Health and Safety and emotional needs of residents, staff, caregivers and visitors.

POLICY:

The Home realizes the role that families, friends, and visitors play in providing caregiving and emotional support that adds to the quality of life of our residents. The visits are guided by the outlined principles from the Ministry of Long-Term Care which are as follows:

Safety:

Any approach to visiting must consider, balance, and meet the health and safety needs of residents, staff, and visitors to ensure risks are mitigated.

Emotional Wellbeing:

Allowing visitors is intended to support the emotional wellbeing of residents and their families/friends, through reducing any potential negative impacts related to social isolation..

Equitable Access:

All individuals seeking to visit a resident must be given equitable visitation access, consistent with resident preference and within reasonable restrictions that safeguard residents.

Flexibility:

The physical/infrastructure characteristics of the LTC home, and its status with respect to availability of Personal Protective Equipment, staffing availability, and any other key factors must be considered.

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Equality:

All residents have the right to choose their visitors. In addition, residents and/or their substitute decision-makers have the right to designate caregivers.

The Home should encourage that visitors should consider their personal health and susceptibility to the virus in determining whether visiting the Home is appropriate.

DEFINITIONS

Types of Visitors:

1. **ESSENTIAL VISITORS**

There are four (4) Types of Essential Visitors:

- **People Visiting Very Ill Or Palliative Residents** who are receiving end-of-life care for compassionate reasons.
- **Government Inspectors With A Statutory Right Of Entry**

Government inspectors who have a statutory right to enter long-term care homes to carry out their duties must be granted access to a home. Examples of government inspectors include inspectors under the Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007, the Health Protection and Promotion Act, the Electricity Act, 1998, the Technical Standards and Safety Act, 2000, and the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

- **Support Workers**

Support workers are persons who visit a home to provide support to the critical operations of the home or to provide essential services to residents. Essential services provided by support workers include but are not limited to:

- assessment, diagnostic, intervention/rehabilitation, and counselling services for residents by regulated health professionals such as physicians and nurse practitioners
- Assistive Devices Program vendors -- for example, home oxygen therapy vendors
- moving a resident in or out of a home
- social work services

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- legal services
- post-mortem services or emergency services (for example, such as those provided by first responders)
- maintenance services such as those required to ensure the structural integrity of the home and the functionality of the home's HVAC mechanical, electrical, plumbing systems, and services related to exterior grounds and winter property maintenance
- food/nutrition and water/drink delivery
- Canada Post mail services and other courier services
- election officials/workers

➤ **Caregivers**

A caregiver is a type of essential visitor who is visiting the home to provide direct care to meet the essential needs of a particular resident. Caregivers must be at least 16 years of age and must be designated by the resident or his/her substitute decision-maker. Direct care includes providing support/assistance to a resident that includes providing direct physical support (for example, eating, bathing and dressing) and/or providing social and emotional support.

Examples of direct care provided by caregivers include but are not limited to the following:

- supporting activities of daily living such as bathing, dressing, and eating assistance
- providing cognitive stimulation
- fostering successful communication
- providing meaningful connection and emotional support
- offering relational continuity assistance in decision-making

Examples of caregivers include:

- friends and family members who provide meaningful connection
- a privately hired caregiver
- paid companions
- translator

2. **GENERAL VISITOR**

To provide nonessential services related to either the operations of the home or a particular resident or group of residents. General visitors younger than 14 years of age must be accompanied by an adult (someone who is 18 years of age or older).

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General visitors include those people visiting for social reasons as well as visitors providing non-essential services such as personal care services, entertainment, or individuals touring the home.

The Home's staff, volunteers and placement students are not considered visitors as their access to the Home is determined by the Administrator and/or Director of Care.

INDOOR VISIT PROCEDURE:

1. Access to Homes and Outbreak Areas

All visitors (except for children under the age of 5) should follow public health measures (i.e., passive screening, undergo a rapid antigen test upon visit (must wait for result upon entering home area and/or room), hand hygiene, masking for source control) for the duration of their visit in the Home.

During an outbreak, and/or suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19, the local Public Health Unit will provide directions on visitors to the Home, depending on the specific situation.

All visitors will be allowed access to the Home regardless of vaccination status; vaccination will continue to be encouraged.

Children of any age may also visit the Home.

1.1. Essential Visitors

Visits for essential visitors are permitted as follows, subject to direction from the local Public Health Unit:

- Any number of essential visitors may visit the Home
- The Home will allow essential caregivers as follows:
 - a) If the resident is self-isolating or symptomatic, a maximum of two (2) caregivers may be designated to visit.
- Where the Home is in a local public health unit region that is in a Lockdown level or the Home is in outbreak, must follow the direction of your local public health unit.

A Caregiver **may not** visit any other resident or Home for 10 days after visiting another

- Resident who is self-isolating or symptomatic; and/or
- The Home is an outbreak

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1.2. General Visitors

A maximum of four (4) general visitors per resident may visit indoors at a time. No general visitors are permitted to visit in any of the following situations:

- The entire Home is experiencing an outbreak;
- The Home is located in a public health unit region that is in a Lockdown level;
- Public Health and/or Ministry of Health restricts general visitors;
- The Resident is self-isolating or symptomatic.

2. Screening

All types of visitors will be self screen on entry for symptoms and exposure for COVID- 19, undergo a rapid antigen test upon visit (must wait for result upon entering home area and/or room and attestation to not be experiencing any of the typical and atypical symptoms. All types of visitors will not be admitted if they do not pass the screening.

In case of confirmed COVID via testing, the visitors are asked to refrain from visiting for 10 days following symptoms onset and/or positive test date (whichever is earlier/applicable). General visitors should postpone non-essential visits to resident(s) who are symptomatic and/or self-isolating, or when the Home is in outbreak.

2.1 Support Workers

If the Support Workers visits several homes during one day, he/she needs to provide proof of the previous negative antigen test. In an emergency situation, the rapid antigen test can be waved.

Long Term Care Home Inspectors have a separate and specific protocol that has been established within the ministry. Inspectors are not required to undergo rapid antigen test.

Signs regarding symptoms screening, masking, and hand hygiene will be posted at the entrance and throughout the Home.

All visitors should adhere to universal masking while indoor visiting. Well-fitted (surgical/procedure) masks are strongly recommended. Masking outdoor is no longer required but recommended if in close proximity to as resident.



POLICY & PROCEDURE

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All essential visitors should complete a personal risk assessment before every resident interaction.

All essential visitors/caregivers providing direct care to or interacting within 2 meters of a resident with suspect or confirmed COVID-19 or in an outbreak area should wear eye protection (goggles, face shield, or safety glasses with side protection), and a well-fitted medical mask or an N95 respirator (or approved equivalent) as appropriate PPE.

When a visitor is symptomatic:

Symptomatic visitors will not be permitted entry into the home. Visitors who become symptomatic while at the Home must leave immediately and be directed to self-isolate at their own home, seek medical assessment as required. Visitors who receive a positive COVID-19 test result while they are at the LTCH must leave the Home immediately and be directed to self-isolate at their own home.

3. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

The Home will provide surgical/procedure masks, gloves, gowns, and eye protection (i.e. face shield or goggles) for essential visitors as needed. Gowns, gloves, and eye protection only need to be worn when the resident is isolating.

When the resident is not isolated, the essential visitor/visitors visiting the resident will be able to take off their mask when they are alone in the resident's room or designated space as indicated by the Home.

If the room is shared, the essential caregiver/visitor can speak with the nurse in charge or management to get further direction in visiting the resident where mask can be taken off.

Masks are to be utilized in all common areas of the Home where other residents and staff are present/congregated.

Essential visitors/visitors to contact management for any larger family gatherings.

For compassionate visits, when a resident is very ill or at end of life, visitors will be allowed even if they fail the screening.

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Note: Individuals that are unable to wear a mask due to medical condition must:

- Provide a medical exemption note to the Home
- If able, to wear a mask to go reception to resident's room or approved visiting area. Once in the resident room or approved visiting area the individual may remove and discard the mask but will apply a new mask before exiting the area
- The individual will undergo a rapid antigen test on each visit
- If tolerated, the resident being visited should wear a mask at all times
- The Home may also consult with their local Public Health unit for further guidance and directions

Furthermore, individuals who are unable to put on or remove their mask without assistance from another person, will receive the required assistance from a staff member who is trained in proper donning and doffing procedures.

Other exemptions to the masking requirements are as follows:

- Any individual who is being accommodated in accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act and/or
- Any individual who is being reasonably accommodated in accordance with the Human Rights Code.

4. Responding to all Types of Visitor Non-adherence

The Home fully recognizes how critical visits are to the resident's care needs and emotional well-being, and therefore the Home will ensure to support all visitors in understanding the importance of adhering to the Home's visitor policy. Every non-adherence to the requirements will be reviewed and dealt with based on the severity of the non-adherence.

4.1 Ending a Visit

Each time a non-adherence occurs, reminders and training of the requirements will be provided to the visitor. The Home will end a visit if the visitor repeatedly fails to adhere to the Home's policy, provided:

- That the visitor received explanations of all applicable requirements
- The visitor was equipped with all the resources to adhere to the requirements (i.e. PPE supplied and demonstrated how to correctly don and doff)
- That the visitor has been given sufficient time to adhere to the requirements.

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The Director of Care or delegate will document any termination of visits due to non- adherence in the electronic health record of the resident.

6.1 Ending a Visit

Each time a non-adherence occurs, reminders and training of the requirements will be provided to the visitor. The Home will end a visit if the visitor repeatedly fails to adhere to the Home's policy, provided:

- That the visitor received explanations of all applicable requirements
- The visitor was equipped with all the resources to adhere to the requirements (i.e. PPE supplied and demonstrated how to correctly don and doff)
- That the visitor has been given sufficient time to adhere to the requirements.

The Director of Care or delegate will document any termination of visits due to non- adherence in the electronic health record of the resident.

6.2 Temporarily Prohibiting a Visitor

The Home will temporarily prohibit a visitor in response to repeated and serious non- adherence with the Home's visitor policy.

Before prohibiting a visitor, the Home will consider whether the non-adherence

- Can be resolved successfully by explaining and demonstrating how the visitor can adhere to the requirements
- Whether the visitor has been given sufficient time and information to comply with the Home's visitor policy
- The nature, severity and frequency of non-compliance (continuously non- adhering over multiple visits)
- The potential impact of discontinuing visits on the resident's clinical and emotional well-being
- Is within the legislative requirements
- Negatively impacts the health and safety of residents, staff, and other visitors in the Home
- Is by a visitor whose previous visits have been ended by the Home

Any decision to temporarily prohibit a visitor should:

- Be made only after all other reasonable efforts to maintain safety during visits have been exhausted
- Stipulate a reasonable length of the prohibition depending on the severity

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- Be clearly communicate to the visitor what requirements will need to be met before visits may be resumed (i.e. reviewing the visitor policy, Public Health Guidelines, etc.); and
- Be documented by the Director of Care or delegate
- Residents' and Family Council should be consulted on procedures for addressing non-adherence by visitors

Where the Home has temporarily prohibited a caregiver, the resident and/or their substitute decision-maker may designate an alternate individual as a caregiver to help meet the resident's care needs.

Outdoor Visits:

1. The Home's Courtyard is the dedicated area outside the building where visitors can meet with residents, and it does not require the visitor to travel through the Home.

REFERENCES:

1. Ministry of Health, COVID-19 guidance document for long-term care in homes Ontario, November 7, 2023.
2. Minister's Directive: COVID-19 response measures for long-term care homes, August 30, 2022.