

<b>CITY OF HAMILTON</b>		<b>POLICY UPDATED:</b> Nov 17 2022
<b>DEPT:</b> Healthy and Safe Communities		<b>POLICY REVIEWED:</b> Nov 17, 2022
<b>DIVISION:</b> Lodges		<b>DATE OF ORIGIN:</b> June 2020
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## Visiting Residents during COVID-19 Pandemic

### PURPOSE:

To follow Ministry of Long-Term Care (MOLTC) & Public Health Ontario (PHO) policy and guidance to support a resumption to safe, meaningful and equitable access to visiting for residents and their designated caregivers, and general visitors, during the COVID 19 global pandemic.

COVID-19 Guidance: Long-Term Care Homes and Retirement Homes for Public Health Units under the *Fixing Long-Term Care Act (FLTCA)*, 2021 establishes requirements for visits to long-term care (LTC) homes. This policy includes protocols to maintain the highest of infection prevention and control (IPAC) standards within the Lodges and includes the following key elements:

- Screening prior to each visit for all visitors entering the Lodge
- COVID testing expectations for caregivers, support workers and general visitors
- Universal source mask requirements for all visitors entering the Lodge
- Guidance on responding to non-adherence by visitors in the Lodge, ending a visiting and temporarily prohibiting a visitor.

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

There is an ongoing need to protect LTC home residents and staff from the risk of COVID-19, as LTC home residents are more susceptible to infection than the general population due to their age and medical conditions. Rules and recommendations regarding visiting aim to balance the health and safety of residents while supporting their emotional well-being and quality of life. The visiting policy of the Home must be congruent with any other requirements established in the (FLTCA) and Ontario Regulation 246/22, most specifically the Residents' Bill of Rights

**Safety** – Any approach to visiting must balance the health and safety needs of residents, staff, and visitors, while ensuring risks are mitigated.

**Emotional Well-Being** – Allowing visitors is intended to support the emotional well-being of residents by reducing any potential negative impacts related to social isolation.

**Equitable Access** – All residents must be given equitable access to receive visitors, consistent with their preferences and within reasonable restrictions that safeguard residents.

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**Flexibility** – The physical/infrastructure characteristics of the home, staffing availability, the outbreak status of the home, and the current status of the home with respect to personal protective equipment (PPE), are all variables considered in developing this policy.

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

**TYPES OF VISITORS:**

**Not Considered Visitors**

LTC home staff, volunteers, and student placements are not considered visitors as their access to the home is determined by the licensee.

**Essential Visitors**

Under COVID-19 Guidance: Long-Term Care Homes, “essential visitor” means,

- a) a caregiver,
- b) a support worker who visits a home to provide support to the critical operations of the home or to provide essential services to residents,
- c) a person visiting a very ill resident for compassionate reasons including, but not limited to, hospice services or end-of-life care, or
- d) a government inspector with a statutory right to enter a long-term care home to carry out their duties.

Essential services provided by support workers include but are not limited to:

- a) assessment, diagnostic, intervention or rehabilitation and counselling services for residents by regulated health professionals such as physicians and nurse practitioners
- b) Assistive Devices Program vendors (for example, home oxygen therapy vendors)
- c) moving a resident in or out of a home
- d) social work services, legal services and post-mortem services
- e) emergency services
- f) 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
- g) food delivery and Canada Post mail services and other courier services

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### Designated caregivers

A caregiver means a type of 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 their substitute decision-maker (if any). Caregivers can include family members who provide meaningful connection, a privately hired caregiver, paid companions, or a translator

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

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

### General visitors

A general visitor is a person who is not an essential visitor and is visiting:

- to provide non-essential services related to either the operations of the home or a particular resident or group of residents. This excludes children under the age of one.
- for social reasons

### DESIGNATION OF CAREGIVERS

- Caregivers must be designated and must be at least 16 years of age.
- A resident and/or their substitute decision-maker may change a designation in response to a change in the:
  - a. resident's care needs that is reflected in the plan of care
  - b. availability of a designated caregiver, either temporary (for example, illness) or permanent
- The designation, or any changes to the designation, should be made in writing to the home by the Resident and/or Substitute Decision Maker (SDM) to the Director of Nursing (DON) or Designate.
- A resident and/or their substitute decision-maker may not continuously change a designation in

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order to increase the number of people able to enter the home.

**Vaccination Status:**

- Visitors are not required to be vaccinated in order to visit with residents

**Infection Control Information for Visitors**

1. Pamphlets are available at the screening desk to provide education/training to all visitors about physical distancing, respiratory etiquette, hand hygiene, IPAC practices, and proper use of PPE

**ACCESS TO THE LODGE AND SCREENING/SWABBING REQUIREMENTS:**

1. All visitors to the home are required to follow public health measures i.e. screening, physical distancing, hand hygiene, masking where required.
2. Rapid Antigen Testing is to be completed on entry to the Lodge at a frequency determined by the Lodge
3. Visitor logs will be maintained for 30 days which include name and contact of visitor, date and time of visit, and the name of the resident visited.

**Indoors**

4. Visitors are required to have a mask in place on entry to the Lodge and will be provided with a medical grade mask during the screening process
5. Masks are to be worn at all times and in all locations during the visit.
6. When a resident is symptomatic or isolating, a designated caregiver may still visit.
7. Visiting for residents who are end of life is unrestricted, including if resident is in isolation. In the case of a palliative resident being in isolation, all visitors will be required to wear PPE as directed by the Lodge.

**Outdoors**

8. Outdoor visits can be any size, space permitting.
9. Rapid Antigen Testing requirements do not apply for outdoor visits or for support workers who solely do work outside of the home (e.g., roof maintenance).

**Visiting residents with confirmed or suspected COVID-19:**

1. Visitors should not visit any other resident or home for 10 days after visiting:

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- a. an individual with a confirmed case of COVID-19
- b. an individual experiencing COVID-19 symptoms

**SCREENING:**

1. Active screening is required for all caregivers, support workers, essential visitors and general visitors. Screening will follow the minimum current requirements set out by Ministry of Long-Term Care or Public Health.
2. Anyone showing or reporting symptoms of COVID -19 will not be allowed to enter the home and will be advised to go home immediately to self isolate and will be encouraged to be tested for COVID- 19.
3. Visitors for palliative end-of-life residents must be screened prior to entry. If they fail screening, they must be permitted entry, but homes must ensure that they wear a medical mask and maintain physical distance from other residents and staff

**SURVEILLANCE TESTING:**

The Lodges will set a frequency of rapid antigen testing that meets any minimum requirements set out by the Ministry of Long-Term Care. Further the Lodge may increase frequency of testing in response to recommendations from Public Health or in response to assessed risk.

**Rapid Antigen Testing Exemptions**

1. Visitors of residents who are identified as Palliative and End of Life care
2. Recent COVID positive visitors who tested positive in the last 90 days with appropriate documentation shared with Director of Nursing or Designate

**PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE):**

1. **Universal Masking:** All visitors must wear a mask provided by the Lodge in all areas on the home.

**Universal Masking Exceptions:** As outlined in COVID19 UNIVERSAL MASK & EYE

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PROTECTION POLICY(IC-04-10).

- Children who are younger than 2 years of age;
  - Any individual (staff, visitor, or resident) who is being accommodated in accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005; and/or
  - Any individual (staff, visitor, or resident) who is being reasonably accommodated in accordance with the Human Rights Code.
2. **Eye protection** is required for caregivers/essential visitors when they are: providing care to residents who are isolating due to suspected/confirmed COVID-19 case, providing direct care to residents within two meters in an outbreak area
  3. The Lodge will provide all required PPE to support safe visiting

**Restrictions during outbreaks or when a resident is isolating**

**Essential visitors**

1. Caregivers may visit during suspect or confirmed Outbreaks, and when residents are receiving isolation care unless the Lodge is directed otherwise by Public Health.

**General visitors**

2. General visitors are not be able to visit Outbreak units

**ALLOWING PETS FOR VISITS** – refer to policy IC-06-02 Pets in the Home Policy

**RESPONDING TO VISITOR NON-ADHERENCE:**

Visits for residents in LTC are of critical importance to the quality of life and emotional well-being of residents.

Any non-adherence to this policy will be viewed as a risk to health and safety; in response to non-adherence the Lodge will meet with the visitor to review:

1. Education and support regarding safe visiting expectations
2. Should a visitor engage in repeated or flagrant non-adherence to the policy, a follow-up will be completed and documented by the Administrator or designate.
3. Prohibiting a visitor from visiting at the Lodge will be a last resort response to non-adherence and signal a complete disregard of the policy by the visitor.

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### Ending a Visit

1. The Lodge may end a visit by any visitor who repeatedly fails to adhere to this visitor policy, provided:
  - a. the home has explained the applicable requirement(s) to the visitor;
  - b. the visitor has the resources to adhere to the requirements; and,
  - c. the visitor has been given enough time to adhere to the requirement(s)
  - d. this will be documented in the resident(s)electronic health record by the Administrator or Designate.

### Temporarily Prohibiting a Visitor

1. The Lodge may temporarily prohibit a visitor in response to repeated and flagrant non-adherence with the home's visitor policy, subject to the mandatory prohibition in the Minister's Directive.
2. The decision to temporarily prohibit a visitor will be made only after all other reasonable efforts to maintain safety during visits have been exhausted; stipulate a reasonable length of the prohibition; clearly identify what requirements the visitor should meet before visits may be resumed (for example, reviewing the home's visitor policy, reviewing specific Public Health Ontario resources); and, will be documented by the Administrator or Designate in resident(s) electronic health record.

### **APPENDIX 1 – Current Directives and Resources**

<https://ltchomes.net/LTCHPORTAL/Content/MLTC%20Guidance%20Document%202022-10-06.pdf>



What Residents  
Can Expect- COVID 1