

SECTION: PANDEMIC PLANNING

INDEX I.D.: J-10-10

SUBJECT: INDOOR VISITS DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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APPROVED BY:

APPROVED DATE: July 22, 2020

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STANDARD:

There are processes in place to ensure the safety, emotional well-being, equitable access, and flexibility during Indoor Visits throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

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

Safety: Any approach to visiting in LTC home 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. Homes must make every effort to maintain the visiting schedule, and any cancellations should be due to extraordinary circumstance such as inclement weather during planned outdoor visits.

Equitable Access: All elected families/friends seeking to visit a resident will be given equitable visitation access, consistent with resident preference and within reasonable restrictions that safeguards residents, families, and staff.

Flexibility: The physical/infrastructure characteristics of the LTC home, and its status with respect to the availability of surgical/procedure masks, staffing, and any other key factors must be considered.

As the pandemic situation evolves in Ontario, the direction in this policy will be adjusted as necessary, keeping the safety and emotional well-being of residents and staff at the forefront.

DEFINITIONS:

Essential Visitors: include a person performing essential support services (i.e. food delivery, inspector, maintenance or health care services) or a person visiting a very ill or palliative resident.

Essential Caregivers: includes individuals who are not staff, essential visitors nor on-site contractors that provide care services to one resident at a Home. In many cases, these essential caregivers are family members. These essential caregivers needed to be in place before the COVID pandemic.

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Visitors: individuals coming to the Home to see a resident who do not fall into another category

PROCEDURE:

Home Requirements: The following baseline requirements must be in place before visitors can be accepted:

1. The Home must **NOT** be currently in an outbreak. In case the Home enters in an outbreak thereafter, all non-essential visitations must end immediately.
2. The procedures for the resumption of safe indoor visits must be well communicated with residents, families, visitors, and staff, including the Infection Prevention and Control Lead and the Occupational Health and Safety Committee. The educational information that needs to be shared are as follows:
 - Importance of physical distancing during the visit (2 meters/6 feet apart)
 - Respiratory etiquette
 - Donning and doffing and proper use of masks and any other Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
 - Proper hand hygiene and any other applicable IPAC practices
 - Operational procedures such as limiting movement in the Home and its property
 - Approach to dealing with in-adherence to home policies and procedures, including the discontinuation of visits
3. The Home will always follow the highest Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) standards prior to, during and after visits.
4. The Home will provide meaningful and equitable access to visits for all residents; and consider the staffing and space capacity available to the Home to maintain the safety of residents, staff, and visitors.
5. The Home will have the discretion in scheduling and must consider the directives in place at the time and whether the visitor is an essential caregiver (i.e. support with feeding).
6. The Home will regulate the number of visitors to the Home at any one time.
7. The Home will create and maintain a list of visitors. The list will be available for relevant staff members to access.

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Visitor Requirements: Visitor is defined as any family member, close friend, or neighbour. Families/friends must establish amongst themselves who will be visiting the resident. Whenever possible, include the resident in making this decision. Prior to each visitor, the visitor must:

1. On each visit, pass an active screening questionnaire administered by home staff and temperature checks. Visitors will not be admitted if they do not pass the screening.
2. Verbally attest to the Home staff that the visitor has tested negative for COVID-19 within the previous 2 weeks and subsequently not tested positive. The Home is not responsible for the testing.
3. Comply with the Home's IPAC protocols, including proper use of surgical/procedural masks and using hand sanitizer at the beginning and end of the visit.
4. Use a surgical/procedural mask and ensure physical distancing for the full duration of the visit.
5. Whenever possible, visitors should bring their own surgical/procedural mask for the indoor visit. If a visitor does not have the appropriate mask, the Home will provide a surgical/procedural mask. The Home should avoid accessing the provincial pandemic stockpile for this purpose.
6. Only visit the one (1) resident they are intending to visit, and not interact with any other residents.
7. Respect that visits may be cancelled in the event the resident is not feeling well, or the Home goes in an outbreak.
8. **Not** bring pets or outside food to the visiting area. Packages for residents can be left with the screener.
9. Any nonadherence to these requirements and rules will be the basis for discontinuation of visits.

Indoor Visits:

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1. The Program Manager or delegate will monitor and oversee family/friends visits during the pandemic. Program staff and other delegates will supervise and support each visit with residents. The Program staff will maintain a log of all visits.
2. The Home will designate a dedicated indoor visiting area where family members and friends can meet with residents. The allocated indoor space will allow for appropriate physical distancing (2 meters apart), and the areas will clearly be marked. Designated staff will support the transfer of residents to the designated area and will wear a surgical/procedural mask.
3. Each resident can have up to two (2) visitors at the time. The visitors can be a different person the next week if needed.
4. Each visit needs to be scheduled in advance through the on-line scheduling system used by the Home. The Home will have designated days and times for visitations. Each visit will be limited to 30 mins to allow the Home to accommodate more families/friends. Gradually the Home will be able to allow a sufficient block of time to allow for, at minimum, one visit per week per resident.
5. Families/friends will be asked to not arrive until 10 minutes before their scheduled visit so that they are not crossing paths with others who may be visiting.
6. The visiting area will be cleaned and disinfected between each visit. The cleaning will be completed by the staff coordinating and supervising the indoor visits. Staff members will be provided with high-level disinfectant wipes (contact time 1 minute)/or equivalent and gloves to clean surfaces and objects such as chair arms, seats, tabletops/legs upon conclusion of the visit; both resident and visitor areas.
7. The scheduling practices must provide meaningful and equitable access to visits for all residents and consider the staffing and space capacity available to maintain the safety of residents, staff, and visitors. The Home will consider the needs of residents in prioritizing visits based on clinical and/or emotional decline.
8. A resident who is in isolation and/or is symptomatic cannot be permitted a visit.

OUTCOME:

1. Indoor visits will occur in a safe and equitable manner.

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2. The gradual visitation approach considers balance and meets the Health and Safety and emotional needs of residents, staff, and visitors.

ADDITIONAL REFERENCES:

1. Ministry of Long-Term Care & Ontario Health: Resuming Visits in Long-Term Care Homes, June 12, 2020
2. OLTC: Best Practice Exchange Forum, June 2020
3. Ministry of Long-Term Care & Ontario Health: Update to Visits at Long-Term Care Homes, July 15, 2020