

<b>CITY OF HAMILTON</b>		<b>POLICY UPDATED:</b> July 21, 2022
<b>DEPT:</b> Healthy and Safe Communities		<b>POLICY REVIEWED:</b> July 21, 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 directive 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 issued by the Chief Medical Officer of Health 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:

- Active screening prior to each visit for all visitors entering the Lodge
- COVID testing expectations for caregivers, support workers and general visitors
- Universal source mask for all visitors entering the Lodge
- Education for visitors entering the lodge on Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) practices
- 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, particularly as LTC home residents are more susceptible to infection from COVID-19 than the general population due to their age and medical conditions. Rules for LTC home visits continue to be in place to protect the health and safety of residents, staff, and visitors, while supporting residents to receive the care they need and maintaining their emotional well-being. These rules are in addition to the requirements established in the (FLTCA) and Ontario Regulation 246/22.

**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.

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

**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.

O Reg 246/22 267(4)

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
- b. health professionals such as physicians and nurse practitioners
- c. Assistive Devices Program vendors (for example, home oxygen therapy vendors)
- d. moving a resident in or out of a home
- e. social work services, legal services and post-mortem services
- f. emergency services
- g. maintenance services such as those required to ensure the structural integrity of the home and the

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functionality of the home's HVAC mechanical, electrical, plumbing systems and services related to exterior grounds and winter property maintenance

h. food delivery and Canada Post mail services and other courier services

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). Direct care includes providing support or assistance to a resident that includes providing direct physical support (for example, eating, bathing and dressing) 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  
 assisting with mobility and personal hygiene, providing cognitive stimulation, fostering successful communication and providing meaningful connection and emotional support, offering relational continuity assistance in decision-making

Examples of caregivers include:

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

**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 (for example, family members or friends) that the resident or their substitute decision-maker assess as different from direct care, including care related to cognitive stimulation, meaningful connection, and relational continuity.

**DESIGNATION OF CAREGIVERS**

- Caregivers must be designated and must be at least 16 years of age.
- Maintain the limit of 4 visitors (both general and/or designated) at a time per resident indoors.
- 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

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

**Vaccination Status:**

- All visitors over the age of 5 are required to be fully vaccinated with two doses of primary series to enter the home.

**Training for Designated Caregiver(s)**

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
2. The following Public Health Ontario resources are used to support IPAC and PPE education and training for caregivers.

Guidance document: [Recommended Steps: Putting on Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\).](#)

Video: [Putting on Full Personal Protective Equipment.](#)

Video: [Taking off Full Personal Protective Equipment.](#)

Video: [How to Hand Wash](#) and [How to Hand Rub](#)

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

Macassa and Wentworth Lodge are operated as per direction of the Hamilton Public Health Unit. The public health unit may provide additional direction and or restrictions on the visitors to the home depending on the specific situation.

1. All visitors to the home are required to follow public health measures i.e. active screening, physical distancing, hand hygiene, masking for source control, for the duration of the visit.
2. 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

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### Indoors

1. Up to **four** visitors (i.e. designated and general) per resident may visit indoors.
2. Caregivers must meet the vaccination requirements outlined in the Vaccination section to visit indoors and must follow all isolation procedures at the direction of the Lodge
3. When a resident is symptomatic or isolating, only one caregiver may visit at a time unless the isolating resident is deemed palliative

### Outdoors

1. Outdoor visits can be any size, space permitting
2. Surveillance testing requirements do not apply for outdoor visits or for support workers who solely do work outside of the home (e.g., roof maintenance). All other health and safety requirements remain in place.

### Designated Caregivers

1. A caregiver should not visit any other resident or home for 10 days after visiting:
  - a. an individual with a confirmed case of COVID-19
  - b. an individual experiencing COVID-19 symptoms
2. Fully vaccinated care givers can spend time with residents in areas outside the resident's room including: lounges, walks in hallways (without going outdoors) and outdoor gardens and patios (if available)

### General Visitors

1. Up to 4 general visitors are permitted to visit the residents at this time, except if the resident is receiving palliative and end of life care
2. All general visitors, including children under the age of 5, can visit homes. Visitors (including caregivers), with the exception of children under the age of 5, need to follow the vaccination policy of the individual long-term care home.

### SCREENING:

1. The screening requirements in Guidance Document apply to all caregivers, support workers, essential visitors and general visitors.
2. All visitors will be actively screened for symptoms and exposure history for COVID-19 prior to being allowed to visit a resident.
3. Anyone showing 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.

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4. 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 (surgical/procedural) mask and maintain physical distance from other residents and staff.

### **SURVEILLANCE TESTING:**

The Lodges will comply with the Minister's Directive, which provides testing and documentation requirements for support workers, caregivers, Essential visitors and general visitors.

#### **Rapid Antigen Testing**

1. **Exemption to surveillance testing:** Visitors of residents who are identified as Palliative and End of Life care are exempt from testing requirements as per directive Guidance Document. Recent COVID positive visitors who tested positive in the last 90 days are exempt from testing.

### **PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE):**

1. All visitors must wear PPE as required in Directive #3.
2. **Universal Masking:** All visitors must wear a mask provided by the Lodge for the entire duration of their shift or visit, regardless of their immunization status, per Guidance Document.
 

**Exception:** Exceptions to the masking requirements are outlined in COVID19 UNIVERSAL MASK & EYE PROTECTION POLICY(IC-04-10). Exceptions to the masking requirements are as follows:

  - 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.
3. **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
4. The home will provide surgical/procedure masks, gloves and gowns as required in Directive #3 and provide guidance when it is required to wear all the above PPE

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

**Essential visitors**

1. Essential visitors are the only type of visitors allowed when a resident is isolating or resides in a home or area of the home in an outbreak.

**General visitors**

2. General visitors are not permitted:  
 In the case where a local public health unit directs a home in respect of the number of visitors allowed, the home is to follow the direction of the local public health unit.

**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. The health and safety of all residents and staff in the Lodge is a shared responsibility for all who live, visit and work within the Lodge. Any non-adherence to this policy will be viewed as a risk to health and safety; as such our response will be both specific and measured to ensure a clear understanding and compliance with the safeguards.

1. Re-education and support will be offered to the visitor in the moment and a review of expectations completed. 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.
2. Prohibiting a visitor from attending the Lodge will be a last resort response to non-adherence and signal a complete disregard of the policy by the visitor.

**Ending a Visit**

1. Homes may end a visit by any visitor who repeatedly fails to adhere to the home's 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 requirement(s) (for example, there is enough space to physically distance, the home has supplied the PPE and demonstrated how to correctly put on PPE; and,

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- 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. Homes 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 following will be considered whether the non-adherence can be resolved successfully by explaining and demonstrating how the visitor can adhere to the requirements:
  - a. is with requirements that align with instruction in COVID-19 Guidance document for Long-Term Care Homes in Ontario.
  - b. negatively impacts the health and safety of residents, staff and other visitors in the home
  - c. is demonstrated continuously by the visitor over multiple visits
  - d. is by a visitor whose previous visits have been ended by the home
3. 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 to guide policy**

1. [COVID-19 Guidance: Long-Term Care Homes and Retirement Homes for Public Health Units \(gov.on.ca\)](https://www.gov.on.ca)
2. [COVID-19 guidance document for long-term care homes in Ontario | ontario.ca](https://www.ontario.ca)