

Infection Control

SECTION7	SUBJECT	POLICY #		
APPROVED BY: VP OF QUALITY AND CLINICAL SERVICES	VISITORS POLICY LONG TERM CARE HOMES DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC	INF 07-02-02		
COVID-19 MANAGEMENT		YY	MM	DD
		2022	06	21

POLICY

The home has established and implement a written visitor policy as required under Ontario Regulation 246/22 made under the Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021 (s. 267. (1) and Directive #3. This policy is periodically updated to meet requirements of all applicable legislation.

PROCEDURE

This policy is effective **June 21, 2022**. All previous versions of the visiting policy are revoked and replaced with this version.

VISITORS' ACCESS TO THE HOME'S VISITOR POLICY

The Long-Term Care Home must:

- Provide a copy of Visitors Policy to Residents' Council and Family Council (if any)
- A copy of Visitors Policy must be included with Resident Information Package
- Post Visitors Policy in the Home
- Communicate Visitors Policy to residents, families and staff
- Post Visitors Policy on LTC home's website

COVID-19 VACCINATION

The goal of the provincial COVID-19 immunization program is to protect Ontarians from COVID-19. Vaccines minimize the risk of severe outcomes, including hospitalizations and death, due to COVID-19, and may help reduce the number of new cases. The Ministry is taking a guidance-based approach that supports licensees with their employer led policies and to promotes best practices. Vaccination policy does not apply to visitors; however, the home will collect vaccination information from visitors at the active screening for the purpose of statistic and potential contact tracing.

Unvaccinated visitors will not be denied entry. Unvaccinated visitors should be visiting resident's room only, and not participate in group activities, gatherings or interact with other residents.

Provision of fourth doses to long-term care residents

Long-term care home residents are eligible to receive their fourth dose three months after receiving their third dose — or three months after having had COVID-19 (or a positive test result). This is because a vaccine booster protects against waning immunity and decreases the likelihood of symptomatic infection and severe outcomes.

Eligible residents who have not yet received fourth dose, should get this vaccination before the end of June 2022 to maximize protection over the summer. (Source- MLTC- June 2022)

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REQUIREMENTS

Residents have a right under the Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021, to receive visitors and homes should not develop policies that unreasonably restrict this right.

Requirements

1. Every long-term care home must have and implement a visitor policy that, at a minimum reflects the following guiding principles:
 - **safety** – any approach to visiting must balance the health and safety needs of residents, staff, and visitors, and ensure risks are mitigated
 - **emotional well-being** – welcoming visitors is intended to support the mental and 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
 - **flexibility** – the physical and infrastructure characteristics of the home, its workforce or human resources availability, whether the home is in an outbreak and the current status of the home with respect to personal protective equipment (PPE) are all variables to consider when setting home-specific policies
 - **equality** – residents have the right to choose their visitors. In addition, residents or their substitute decision-makers, as applicable, have the authority to designate caregivers
2. In accordance with section 267(2) of O. Reg. 246/22, homes must maintain visitor logs of all visits to the home. These visitor logs or records must be kept for a period of at least 30 days and be readily available to the local public health unit for contact tracing purposes upon request. The visitor log must include, at a minimum:
 - the name and contact information of the visitor
 - time and date of the visit
 - the purpose of the visit (for example, the name of resident visited)
3. Homes must ensure that all visitors have access to the home’s visitor policy.
4. Homes must provide education or training to all visitors about physical distancing, respiratory etiquette, hand hygiene, IPAC practices, and proper use of PPE.

TYPES OF VISITORS

Not considered visitors

Long-term care home staff (as defined under the Act), volunteers, and student placements are not considered visitors as their access to the home is determined by the licensee.

Infants under the age of one are also not considered visitors and are excluded from testing requirements.

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ESSENTIAL VISITORS

There are no limits on the total number of essential visitors allowed to come into a home at any given time. **Essential visitors are the only type of visitors allowed when there is an outbreak in a home or area of a home or when a resident has failed screening, is symptomatic or in isolation.**

As per O. Reg. 246/22 under the Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021, there are four types of essential visitors:

- **a caregiver**, as defined under section 4 of O. Reg. 246/22
- **a support worker** who visits a home to provide support to the critical operations of the home or to provide essential services to residents
- **a person visiting a very ill resident** for compassionate reasons including, but not limited to, hospice services or end-of-life care
- **a government inspector** with a statutory right to enter a long-term care home to carry out their duties

Caregivers – scheduling and length and frequency of visits

Homes may not require scheduling or restrict the length or frequency of visits by caregivers. However, in the case where a resident resides in an area of the home in outbreak, is symptomatic or isolating under additional precautions, only one caregiver may visit at a time.

A caregiver should not visit any other home for 10 days after visiting:

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

Caregivers who want to volunteer to support more than one resident.

- In the event of an outbreak, caregivers may support up to two residents who are COVID-19 positive, provided the home obtains consent from all involved residents **(or their substitute decision makers)**
- Caregivers may also support more than one resident in non-outbreak situations, with the same expectation regarding resident consent

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. General visitors include those persons visiting for social reasons as well as visitors providing non-essential services such as personal care services, entertainment, or individuals touring the home. Homes should prioritize the mental and emotional well-being of residents and strive to be as accommodating as possible when scheduling visits with general visitors.

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ACCESS TO HOMES

All general visitors, including children under the age of five, can enter the long-term care home. General visitors, with the exception of the children under the age of five, will need to follow the vaccination policy of the individual long-term care home.

Up to four visitors (including caregivers) per resident may visit at a time for indoor visits.

There are no sector limits on the number of visitors permitted at outdoor visits, and homes can return to their regular practices on use of their available outdoor spaces in accordance to applicable guidance and laws. Homes should not restrict individuals from outdoor visits based on vaccination status. Homes should ensure physical distancing (a minimum of two metres or six feet) is maintained between groups.

RESTRICTIONS DURING OUTBREAKS OR WHEN A RESIDENT IS ISOLATING

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 are not permitted:

- when a home or area of a home is in outbreak
- to visit an isolating resident
- when the local public health unit so directs

In the case where a local public health unit directs a home in respect of the number of visitors allowed, the home must follow the direction of the local public health unit.

REQUIREMENTS RELATED TO ACTIVE SCREENING AND SURVEILLANCE TESTING OF VISITORS

The Home implements measures related to Active Screening and Surveillance Testing of visitors consistent with all applicable Government of Ontario legislation and recommendations.

Active Screening:

All staff, students, volunteers, support workers, visitors, caregivers and residents regardless of vaccination status, must be actively screened for COVID-19 upon entry of the Long-Term Care Home.

All residents must be actively screened for COVID-19 once per day using Resident's Screening electronic User Defined assessment in Point Click Care.

During COVID-19 exposure, surveillance or outbreak, residents' Active Screening may increase to twice per day.

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Surveillance Testing:

All staff, students, volunteers, support workers, visitors and caregivers, regardless of vaccination status, must be tested at every entry to the home, prior to accessing resident areas (see “COVID-19 PCR testing-antigen testing policy access to the homes”)

Minister of Long-Term Care’s Directive “COVID-19: Long-term care home surveillance testing and access to homes” sets minimum requirements related to surveillance testing
<https://www.ontario.ca/page/covid-19-long-term-care-home-surveillance-testing>

EDUCATION/TRAINING REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL VISITORS

- physical distancing
- respiratory etiquette
- hand hygiene
- IPAC practices
- proper use of PPE

Public Health Ontario resources to support IPAC and PPE education and training

(<https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/diseases-and-conditions/infectious-diseases/respiratory-diseases/novel-coronavirus/long-term-care-resources>)

- guidance document: recommended steps: putting on personal protective equipment
<https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/ipac/ppe-recommended-steps>
- video: putting on full personal protective equipment
<https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/videos/ipac-fullppe-on>
- video: taking off full personal protective equipment
<https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/videos/ipac-fullppe-off>
- videos how to hand wash <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/videos/ipac-handwash>
- video how to hand rub <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/videos/ipac-handrub>
- respiratory etiquette PHO [Cover Your Cough \(publichealthontario.ca\)](https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/cover-your-cough)

Documentation:

- Designated staff will document the training provided in Visitor Education Roster

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- Caregiver confirms by signing in the respective section on “LTC Visitors & Caregivers Education” form

Table: Visitors Training Guide	Essential Caregiver	General Visitor	Frequency
Guidance document: recommended steps: putting on personal protective equipment** https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/ipac/ppe-recommended-steps	X	X	Prior to 1 st visit
	X		Every 6 Months
Video entitled <u>putting on full personal protective equipment</u> ** https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/videos/ipac-fullppe-on	X	X	Prior to 1 st visit
	X		Every 6 Months
Video entitled <u>Taking off Full Personal Protective Equipment.</u> ** https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/videos/ipac-fullppe-off	X	X	Prior to 1 st visit
	X		Every 6 Months
Video entitled <u>How to Hand Wash.</u> ** https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/videos/ipac-handwash	X	X	Prior to 1 st visit
	X		Every 6 Months
Video entitled <u>How to Hand Rub</u> ** https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/videos/ipac-handrub	X	X	Prior to 1 st visit
	X		Every 6 Months
Physical Distancing Poster – Public Health Agency of Canada social-distancing-eng.pdf (canada.ca)	X	X	Prior to 1 st visit and as necessary for re-education
Respiratory etiquette PHO Cover Your Cough (publichealthontario.ca)	X	X	Prior to 1st visit
	X		Every 6 Months
Feeding the resident Video ** (as per Essential Visitors-Caregivers Request Form) https://youtu.be/zZ-6Rp6hkhY	X		Prior to 1 st visit (if applicable)
**Retraining must be provided with each observed noncompliance and based on auditing outcome(s)			

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PROVISIONS REGARDING HOME'S IMPLEMENTATION OF ALL REQUIRED PUBLIC HEALTH MEASURES AND INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL PRACTICES (IPAC)

The importance of ongoing adherence to strong and consistent IPAC processes and practices cannot be overstated. The home strives to prevent and limit the spread of COVID-19 by ensuring that strong and consistent IPAC practices are implemented and continuously reviewed. Appropriate and effective IPAC practices must be carried out by all people attending or living in the home, at all times, regardless of whether there are cases of COVID-19 in the home or not, and regardless of the vaccination status of an individual.

IPAC audits

- The Homes required to complete IPAC audits at least every two weeks unless in outbreak.
- When the Home is in outbreak the IPAC audits are completed at least weekly.
- IPAC audits are rotated across shifts, including weekends.

PHYSICAL DISTANCING

Homes must ensure that physical distancing (a minimum of 2 metres or 6 feet) is practiced by all individuals at all times, except for the purposes of providing direct care to a resident or when the following additional exceptions apply:

- for residents to have brief physical contact with their visitors, regardless of visitors' immunization status
- between residents either one on one or in small group settings
- between fully vaccinated visitors and fully vaccinated residents
- for the purposes of a compassionate/palliative visit
- personal care services (for example, haircutting) and must be in accordance with all applicable laws

UNIVERSAL MASKING AND EYE PROTECTION (see "Universal Mask and Eye Protection Policy During COVID-19")

REFERENCES:

- **Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021** <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/21f39>
- **Regulations under the Act: O. Reg. 246/22** <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/21f39>
- **COVID-19 Guidance document for long term care homes in Ontario** <https://www.ontario.ca/page/covid-19-guidance-document-long-term-care-homes-ontario>