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Policy Section:		COVID-19	
Effective Date:		May 2021	
Prepared By:		Ministry of Long-Term Care	
Revision Date:		September 2022	
Subject:	COVID-19 Visiting Policy		

Source

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/covid-19-guidance-document-long-term-care-homes-ontario>


Visitor Policy

All homes are required to establish and implement a visitor policy that complies with this document, and the Act, O. Reg. 246/22, in addition to all other applicable laws.

Homes are reminded that 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:
 - o **safety** – any approach to visiting must balance the health and safety needs of residents, staff, and visitors, and ensure risks are mitigated
 - o **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
 - o **equitable access** – all residents must be given equitable access to receive visitors, consistent with their preferences and within reasonable restrictions that safeguard residents
 - o **flexibility** – the physical/infrastructure characteristics of the home, its workforce/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
 - o **equality** – residents have the right to choose their visitors. In addition, residents and/or their substitute decision-makers, as applicable, have the authority to designate caregivers
 - sets out the parameters, requirements, and procedures prescribed in the current version of this document with respect to visitors, including but not limited to:
 - o the definitions of the different types of visitors;
 - o the requirement to designate caregivers in accordance with the O. Reg. 246/22;
 - o restrictions with respect to visitors in the event of an outbreak or when a resident is isolating; and
 - o non-compliance by visitors of the home’s visitor policy.
 - includes provisions around the home’s implementation of all required public health measures as well as infection prevention and control practices.

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- reflects the requirements related to the active screening, and surveillance testing of visitors, as per the [Ministry of Health's COVID-19 COVID 19 Screening Tool for Long-Term Care Homes and Retirement Homes](https://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/2019_screening_guidance.pdf)

https://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/2019_screening_guidance.pdf this guidance document, as applicable.

- In accordance with section 267(2) of O. Reg. 246/22, homes must maintain visitor logs of all visits to the home. The visitor log must include, at minimum:
 - the name and contact information of the visitor
 - time and date of the visit
 - the purpose of the visit (e.g. the name of resident visited)

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

- Homes must ensure that all visitors have access to the home's visitor policy.
- Homes must provide education/training to all visitors about physical distancing, respiratory etiquette, hand hygiene, IPAC practices, and proper use of PPE.

The home's visitor policy should include guidance from the following Public Health Ontario resources to support IPAC and PPE education and training:

- guidance document: recommended steps: putting on personal protective equipment
- video: putting on full personal protective equipment
- video: taking off full personal protective equipment
- videos: how to hand wash and how to hand rub

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 1 are also not considered visitors and are excluded from testing and vaccination requirements.

Essential visitors

There are no limits on the total number of essential visitors allowed to come into a home at any given time under this guidance.

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.

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

- (a) a caregiver, as defined under section 4 of O. Reg. 246/22,
- (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) government inspectors with a statutory right to enter long-term care homes 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

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.

Access to homes

General visitors, including children under the age of 5, can enter the long-term care home. General visitors, with the exception of children under the age of 5 will need to follow the vaccination policy of the individual long-term care home, except for infants 12 months or younger.

- 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.

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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

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

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

Direction from the local public health unit

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.

Surveillance testing

All staff, students, volunteers, support workers, general visitors and caregivers, must be tested in accordance with the Minister's Directive. Refer directly to the Minister of Long-Term Care's Directive COVID-19: Long-term care home surveillance testing and access to homes for requirements related to surveillance testing.

<u>Cross References:</u> None	<u>Attachments:</u> IPC-H-50A (General Visitor Information Sheet); IPC-H-50B (Essential Caregiver Visitor Information Sheet)
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