

Subject: Managing Visitors	Policy: #IPAC-COVID-9.7
Classification: NURSING	Sub Classification: Infection Prevention and Control
Section:9. COVID-19 Pandemic	
Effective Date: May 14, 2021	Supersede Date: February 7, 2023
Reviewed/Updated: February 7, 2023	Approved Date: February 7, 2023

PREAMBLE

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 condition. Rules for LTC home visits continue to be in place to protect the health and safety of residents, staff and visitors, while supporting residents in receiving 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.

PURPOSE

To provide protocols which will support residents in receiving visitors, while mitigating risk of exposure to COVID-19.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all Employees of OMNI Health Care and all persons, including support workers, essential visitors and caregivers and general visitors attending the Home.

DEFINITIONS

Antigen test means a point-of-care rapid antigen test for the novel coronavirus known as COVID-19 where the test kit has been obtained from Ontario Health and is taken in accordance with rapid antigen screening guidance.

Essential Visitors: Essential visitors are persons visiting a Home to meet an essential need related to the operations of the Home or residents that could not be adequately met if the person did not visit the Home. There are 4 types of essential visitors:

- People visiting very ill or palliative residents who are receiving end-of-life care for compassionate reasons, hospice services, etc.

- Government inspectors with a statutory right of entry. Government inspectors who have a

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statutory right to enter long-term care homes to carry out their duties must be granted access to a home. Examples of government inspectors include inspectors under the Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021, the Health Protection and Promotion Act, the Electricity Act, 1998, the Technical Standards and Safety Act, 2000, and the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

- Support workers: Support workers are persons who visit a home to provide support to the critical operations of the home or to provide essential services to residents. Essential services provided by support workers include but are not limited to:
 - Assessment, diagnostic, intervention/rehabilitation, and counselling services for residents by regulated health professionals such as physicians and nurse practitioners
 - Assistive Devices Program vendors -- for example, home oxygen therapy vendors
 - Moving a resident in or out of a home
 - Social work services
 - Legal services
 - Post-mortem services
 - Emergency services (for example, such as those provided by first responders)
 - 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
 - Food/nutrition and water/drink delivery
 - Canada Post mail services and other courier services
 - Election officials/workers

Essential Caregiver: An Essential Caregiver is an individual who is a family member or friend of a resident or a person of importance to a resident, provides one or more forms of support or assistance to meet the needs of the resident, including providing direct physical support or assistance to meet the needs of a resident, including providing direct physical support such as activities of daily living or providing social or emotional support, whether on a paid or unpaid basis. An Essential Caregiver must be designated in writing and be at least 16 years of age.

Fully Vaccinated: A person is considered **fully vaccinated** in Ontario if they have received:

- the full series of a COVID-19 vaccine authorized by Health Canada, or any combination of such vaccines (two doses of Moderna, Pfizer-BioNTech, AstraZeneca, including COVISHIELD) in any combination or one dose of Janssen (Johnson & Johnson)
- one or two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine not authorized by Health followed by one dose of a COVID-19 mRNA vaccine authorized by Health Canada

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- three doses of a COVID-19 vaccine not authorized by Health Canada
- your final dose of the COVID-19 vaccine at least 14 days before providing the proof of being fully vaccinated.

General Visitors: Persons who are not essential visitors and are visiting to provide non-essential services or for social reasons, e.g. family members or friends that are not providing direct care but are providing cognitive stimulation, meaningful connection and relational continuity.

PCR test: A validated real-time polymerase chain reaction (PCR) assay laboratory test for the novel coronavirus known as COVID-19.

Support workers: Support workers are persons who visit a home to provide support to the critical operations of the home or to provide essential services to residents. Essential services provided by support workers include but are not limited to:

- Assessment, diagnostic, intervention/rehabilitation, and counselling services for residents by regulated health professionals such as physicians and nurse practitioners
- Assistive Devices Program vendors -- for example, home oxygen therapy vendors
- Moving a resident in or out of a home
- Social work services
- Legal services
- Post-mortem services
- Emergency services (for example, such as those provided by first responders)
- 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
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POLICY

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Visitors will be permitted to the Home subject to the direction of Public Health and based on the requirements of Minister's Directive: COVID-19 response measures for long-term care homes, and OMNI Health Care visiting policies as amended from time to time.

PROCEDURE

General

1. The Home shall provide communication to Residents, Families, Essential Caregivers and SDMs regarding visiting policies and status of Home visitation, including hours, IPAC processes, PPE requirements and potential consequences of non-compliance with established procedures.
2. Each person attending the Home for a visit shall be responsible for self-screening for symptoms and exposure history prior to entering the Home, as per the Entrance Screening policy and the Surveillance Testing policy. Any visitor who fails screening will not be permitted to enter the Home and the visit will be cancelled. Exceptions may be granted on compassionate grounds in consultation with the Administrator or designate.
3. Any person entering the home determined to have reported false or inaccurate results may be subject to restrictions or temporary suspension of access to the Home.
4. The Home shall ensure there is a visitor log available at the Entrance of the Home which records:
 - The full name (first and last) of the visitor;
 - The telephone number(s) of the visitor;
 - Time and Date of visit;
 - Name of Resident visited;
 - The Purpose of the visit; and
 - An attestation of a negative COVID test result.
 - A verification of the negative COVID test result completed by the Home

This information is required for all General visitors, Essential Visitors, Essential Caregivers and Support Workers without exception each time they visit. Staff are not required to sign the visitor log.

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Visiting logs shall be maintained by the Home for a minimum of 30 days and be readily available to the local public health unit for contact tracing purposes upon request.

5. The number of visitors that can attend the Home at any time shall be subject to scheduling and space availability in the Home. There are no limits to the number of visitors a Resident can have in the Home.
6. General Visitors younger than 14 years of age must be accompanied by an adult and must follow all applicable Public Health measures, including screening, surveillance testing, physical distancing and universal masking.
7. The Home may implement designated visiting hours to limit general traffic and access to the Home during times of high community transmission. Homes shall have the discretion to designate reasonable visitation periods and will be required to communicate those hours, as well as to ensure the visiting schedule on the OMNI website is updated to reflect available hours.
8. General Visitors are not permitted:
 - If the Home is in outbreak
 - To visit an isolating resident
 - At any other time the local public health unit issues restrictions

In larger homes where only one floor or unit is affected by an outbreak, general visitors may be permitted, at the discretion of Public Health, provided the floor or unit they intend to visit is not affected by the outbreak or the Resident they are visiting is not isolating.

9. If the entire Home is in outbreak, or if a Resident is symptomatic or isolating, Essential Caregivers will be permitted to attend the Home. In these circumstances, one essential caregiver will be permitted to attend the home at one time. In larger homes where only one floor or unit is affected by an outbreak, essential caregivers may be permitted without limitations, at the discretion of Public Health, provided the floor or unit they intend to visit is not affected by the outbreak or the Resident they are visiting is not isolating.
10. The Home shall determine the process for greeting general visitors and for assisting all visitors to complete donning and doffing of PPE and hand-hygiene using alcohol-based hand sanitizer to ensure safety.

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11. Essential Caregivers or General Visitors visiting indoors, regardless of vaccination status, will be permitted to use the public washrooms during their visits. Any person attending the home for an outdoor visit wishing to enter the Home to use the washroom must be complete self-screening as per the Entrance Screening policy, prior to entry to the Home, even if they are only entering for this purpose.

Managing Safe Visits

1. All visitors to the Home are required to follow Public Health measures, including hand hygiene, physical distancing when indicated and use of personal protective equipment for the duration of the visit.
2. Prior to visiting the Resident for the first time, the Home will provide each visitor with education regarding hand-hygiene, donning and doffing of personal protective equipment by way of educational posters, demonstrations of proper technique and the Home's posted visiting policies prior to their initial visit. Ongoing education shall be required on a quarterly basis to ensure information regarding changes in policy, directives or any required refreshers are provided.
3. The **COVID-19 Waiver of Liability, Declaration & Indemnity Agreement** ("the waiver") holds Essential Care Givers (ECG) attending the Home accountable for compliance with all directives, policies, procedures and safety protocols. All ECGs shall be required read and sign the waiver indicating they acknowledge and accept the risk of visiting the home during an outbreak prior to attending the Home. In the event any person does not agree with this requirement, the Administrator or designate shall speak with the person(s) to determine the nature of the concern and attempt to resolve the matter. Should the issue remain unresolved, the Administrator shall contact the Director of Operations for assistance.
4. Essential Caregivers and General Visitors attending the Home for a visit shall be required to have a negative antigen test prior to the commencement of each visit. The Home reserves the right to increase testing frequency based on risk, including level of community spread, outbreak status, etc.
5. A self-testing protocol will be implemented in all Homes for all general visitors and essential caregivers. In the event any person is unable to complete self-testing for any reason, they shall be required to contact the Home in advance to schedule testing upon their arrival to the Home.

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6. Please refer to the Surveillance Testing policy [**Essential Caregiver, Visitor, Essential Worker Testing**] for full procedural requirements.
7. Any Visitor or Essential Caregiver determined to have reported false or inaccurate results may be subject to restrictions or temporary suspension of access to the Home.
8. A positive antigen test result indicates the person may not enter the Home. Any person with a positive antigen test result will be required to go home, self-isolate and contact public health. Exceptions may be granted on compassionate grounds in consultation with the Administrator or designate.
9. All visitors must always comply with the established and required policies for use of Personal Protective Equipment.

Visitors shall be required to comply with universal masking requirements and must wear a medical mask for the entire duration of their visit. Exceptions are permitted and masks may be removed in the following circumstances:

- When visiting a resident that resides in a private room,
- When visiting a resident that resides in shared accommodation if their roommate is not in the room during the visit,
- When visiting a resident that resides in shared accommodation if their roommate is present and consents. **Note that the resident MUST be capable of consent.**
- The Home is not in outbreak.

Masks must be worn in the presence of staff and other residents at all times, without exception. If a staff enters a resident room where a visit is occurring without masks, the visitor or essential caregiver shall be required to put a mask on while the staff is present in the room.

Eye-Protection: Eye protection is not required during scheduled visits.

If a resident is self-isolating due to suspected or confirmed COVID-19, or the Home is in outbreak, essential caregivers attending the Home to provide support to a resident will be

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required to wear eye-protection, regardless of immunization status.

Additional PPE (e.g., gowns, gloves or eye protection at increased frequency) may be required in some circumstances and will be provided by the Home in such cases.

10. Physical contact, including for non-care related reasons, shall be permitted between Essential Caregivers or General Visitors residents.
11. Visits may be monitored by the Home to ensure compliance with IPAC precautions and policies. Any supervision of visits shall be conducted in a manner that respects the Resident's right to communicate in confidence and consult with any person without interference.
12. The designated Employee will assist all visitors attending for indoor or outdoor visits to complete the donning and doffing of PPE and hand hygiene using alcohol-based hand sanitizer, in the correct order to ensure safety.

Non-Adherence by Visitors

1. The Home shall respond to non-adherences by visitors promptly and respectfully with verbal redirection and corrective action for any infraction with PPE use or physical distancing breach. If the severity of the non-adherence is significant or if an Employee observes unsafe practice and redirection is not accepted by the visitor, the assistance of the closest manager or Nurse in Charge should be sought immediately.
2. The Home shall have the discretion to end a visit by a visitor who repeatedly fails to adhere to the home's visitor policy, provided:
 - The home has explained the applicable requirements to the visitor;
 - The visitor has the resources to adhere to the requirements, e.g. the Home has supplied PPE, there is sufficient space for physical distancing, etc.
 - The visitor has been given sufficient time to adhere to the requirements.
3. Any incident of non-adherence shall be documented by the Home, including a description of the infraction, redirection or reeducation provided and the resolution.
4. The Home shall have the discretion to temporarily prohibit a visitor in response to repeated and flagrant non-adherence with the home's visitor policy. In exercising this discretion, homes should consider whether the non-adherence:
 - Can be resolved successfully by explaining and demonstrating how the visitor can

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- adhere to the requirements;
 - Is within the requirements that align with instruction in the Minister’s Directive: COVID-19 response measures for long-term care homes
 - Negatively impacts the health and safety of residents, staff, and other visitors to the home;
 - Is demonstrated continuously by the visitor over multiple visits;
 - Is by a visitor whose previous visits were ended by the home.
5. Any decision to temporarily prohibit a visitor shall:
- Be made only after all reasonable efforts to maintain safety during visits have been exhausted;
 - Be discussed with the Director of Operations prior to being enforced;
 - Be provided in writing to the visitor whose visits have been discontinued;
 - Stipulate a reasonable length of time for prohibition;
 - Clearly identify what requirements the visitor should meet before visits may be resumed, (IPAC training, policy review);
 - Be documented by the home in writing;
6. If this prohibition involves an essential caregiver or support staff the SDM may be notified to appoint or hire a new person to ensure the resident’s needs continue to be met.

Vaccination Requirements

There continues to be an increased risk for severe outcomes as a result of COVID-19 in the elderly population due to age and underlying medical conditions, particularly in shared living spaces like long-term care homes. Vaccination remains the best defense against COVID-19.

Vaccination has shown to be very effective against severe illness and outcomes. Staying up-to-date with recommended doses restores protection that wanes over time. More specifically, booster doses help to increase protection against symptomatic infection and severe outcomes, such as hospitalization and ICU admission.

OMNI Health Care has a mandatory COVID-19 vaccination policy in place for all staff and contract service providers that enter the Home to work and provide care to our residents. While there is no mandatory requirement for visitors and/or essential caregivers to receive a COVID-19 vaccine, all individuals entering long-term care homes, including residents, caregivers and visitors, are strongly encouraged to get vaccinated and stay up-to-date with recommended doses as per the Ministry of Health’s COVID-19 Vaccine Guidance.

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Visits or access to the Home shall not be restricted on the basis of vaccination status.

RESPONSIBILITY

It is the responsibility of all Employees of OMNI Health Care to adhere to the requirements of this policy.

It is the responsibility of the Administrator to ensure compliance with the obligations of this policy.

COMMUNICATION

The Home's visiting policies will be communicated to the Residents, Families, Essential Caregivers and General visitors on a regular basis as updates and new directives emerge.

EVALUATION

This policy will be evaluated as Directives and guidelines from the CMOH, the Ministry of Long Term Care, Public Health or other regulatory body are updated.