



Subject: Visitor Policy	Policy #: OP-AM-7.5
Classification: OPERATIONS	Sub Classification: Administration and Management
Section: 7 - Home Operations	Effective Date: May 14, 2021
Reviewed Date: August 27, 2024	Approved Date: August 27, 2024

PREAMBLE

Omni Quality Living understands the importance of visits by family, friends and visitors in enhancing the quality of life and emotional well-being of our residents. Visitors are welcome to visit at any time that is mutually agreed upon by the resident and that keeps in mind other residents need for privacy and rest.

Every resident has the right to communicate in confidence, receive visitors of their choice and consult in private with any person without interference. – Fixing Long Term Care Act, 2021, s.3(1) ss.3.

This visiting policy is guided by the following 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 – Allowing visitors is intended to support the 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/infrastructure characteristics of the home, its staffing 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 take into account when setting home-specific policies.

Equality – Residents have the right to choose their visitors. In addition, residents and/or their substitute decision-makers have the right to designate caregivers.

PURPOSE

To ensure a safe environment that follows provincially mandated protocols, this policy provides guidance on how visits are to be implemented.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all employees and all persons, including support workers, essential visitors and caregivers and general visitors attending an Omni Home.

DEFINITIONS

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:



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- 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 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 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.

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.

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



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- Election officials/workers

POLICY

Visitors will be permitted to the Home subject to the direction of Public Health and based on the requirements of Ontario Ministry of Health document Recommendations for Outbreak Prevention and Control in Institutions and Congregate Living Settings, and/or other relevant legislation or directive and Omni Quality Living visitor policies as amended from time to time.

Visitors should consider their personal health and susceptibility to the virus in determining whether visiting a LTC home is appropriate.

Omni Homes are responsible to support residents in receiving visitors during non-outbreak situations and during an outbreak of a communicable disease or an outbreak of a disease of public health significance, an epidemic or a pandemic.

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. A copy of the Visitors policy will be provided to the Residents' Council and posted on the Omni website.
2. Each person attending the Home for a visit shall be responsible for self-screening for symptoms of illness or infection and exposure history prior to entering the Home, in accordance with the Entrance Screening policy. Information will be posted at all entrances and exits and throughout the Home listing symptoms of illness/infection and reminding visitors not to attend the home if they are feeling ill or would otherwise fail screening. Any visitor who fails screening will not be permitted to enter the Home. 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;



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- Name of Resident visited;
- The Purpose of the visit.

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.

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. There are no limits to the number of visitors a Resident can have in the Home, subject to space availability. The Home shall not unreasonably implement restrictions or space limitations.
6. General Visitors younger than 14 years of age must be accompanied by an adult and must follow all applicable Public Health measures and the general requirements of the visitor's policy.
7. The Home may implement designated visiting hours to limit general traffic and access to the Home during times of high community transmission or under other reasonable circumstances. Homes shall have the discretion to designate reasonable visitation periods, in consultation with Omni Home Office and will be required to communicate those hours to Residents and their guests in the Home.
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. Essential caregivers should be educated on the potential risk of exposure when visiting a symptomatic resident.
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.
11. General Visitors and/or Essential Caregivers should be directed to the nursing station prior to visiting residents.



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12. The Home shall not unreasonably deny access to any area of the Home, including washrooms, dining areas, activity or recreation space, to any visitor or ECG.
13. A visitor or essential caregiver who receives a positive COVID-19 result or develops any signs or symptoms of illness or infection while they are at the Home should leave immediately and be directed to self-isolate at their Home until symptoms have been improving for 24 hours (48 if GI) and no fever present.
14. If an essential caregiver or visitor is symptomatic, it is recommended that they do not enter the home. In some circumstances, the Home, in consultation with the outbreak management team (OMT) and/or Omni Home Office, exceptions may be granted on compassionate grounds to support visitation of residents that are end of life.
15. Visitors or ECGs should notify the Home of any recent illness or positive COVID-19 test.

For a total of 10 days after the date of specimen collection or symptom onset, whichever is earlier, visitors should avoid non-essential visits to the Home. Where visits cannot be avoided, visitors will be required to wear an N-95 respirator, maintain physical distancing, and may have limited access within the Home, e.g., visit the resident's room only. If tolerated, the resident being visited should also wear a mask for the duration of a visit with a COVID positive visitor or caregiver.

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



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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. Asymptomatic surveillance testing is not required at this time. The Home reserves the right to revise the surveillance testing policy based on risk, including level of community spread, outbreak status, etc.
5. 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.
6. All visitors must always comply with the established and required policies for use of Personal Protective Equipment. Though recommended, visitors and ECGs will no longer be required to wear a mask while attending the Home.

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 required to wear and N-95 and eye-protection.

If a resident is self-isolating due to other suspected or confirmed respiratory illness, or the Home is in outbreak, essential caregivers attending the Home to provide support to a resident will be required to wear a medical/procedure mask.

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.

7. Physical contact, including for non-care related reasons, shall be permitted between Essential Caregivers or General Visitors and residents.
8. Visits may be monitored by the Home to ensure compliance with IPAC precautions and policies. Monitoring 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.
9. If education or assistance is required, a designated Employee will assist all visitors attending for indoor or outdoor visits to complete the donning and doffing of PPE as required 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. 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.



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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 adhere to the requirements;
 - Is within the requirements that align with instruction in the Ministry of Health document Recommendations for Outbreak Prevention and Control in Institutions and Congregate Living Settings or other regulation or directive.
 - 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.



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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 Quality Living strongly encourages all staff and contract service providers that enter the Home to work and provide care to our residents to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. 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.

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

RESPONSIBILITY

It is the responsibility of all individuals entering an Omni Home 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 Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Long Term Care, Public Health or other regulatory body are updated.

References:

Recommendations for Outbreak Prevention and Control in Institutions and Congregate Living Settings

<https://www.ontario.ca/files/2024-04/moh-recommendations-for-outbreak-prevention-and-control-in-institutions-and-cls-en-2024-04-09.pdf>