
Visiting Program & Essential Visitors

Date Originated:	Date Re-Written (if applicable):	Date of Last Review:	Last Reviewed and Approved by:
21-12-21		23-06-29	K. Edge & G. Pinto

PART 1:

Replaces Policy: COVID-19 Policy (temporary) ~ Essential Caregivers

Scope of Policy:

- [1] Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021 – Resident’s Bill of Rights #6, 20
- [2] Fixing Long-Term Care Act 2021 – O. Reg. 246/22 Section: 267
- [3] Reference Document: COVID-19 Guidance Document for Long-Term Care Homes in Ontario

Exceptions & Limitations:

- Essential visitors, as defined in “Definitions” below are able to enter the Home during outbreaks, pandemics, epidemics and when an individual resident is in isolation

PART 2:

Communication & Training (to staff, residents and families):

- This policy is made available on our mandatory posting bulletin board across from the Nurses Station
- This policy is available on the Home’s website effective July 11, 2022
- Regular updates are sent to families/visitors for whom we have an email address on file, so ongoing information about our visiting and Essential Caregiver (ECG) programs were first shared that way during the COVID pandemic
- Information about our visiting and ECG program is shared with new families upon admission
- An overview of this policy is included in the Resident/Family Handbook
- Staff who play a role in this program are trained in their role
- This policy was reviewed by the Residents’ and Family Councils upon its initial writing and will be discussed with every significant change

PART 3:

Goal (Policy Statement): Visitors and designated caregivers play a key role in the lives of residents, especially related to providing care and support during times when staff may not be available. This policy sets out the protocols needed to ensure a safe visiting program for residents.

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Procedures:

General Visitors:

1. The Home welcomes general visitors to the Home, subject to restrictions that may be put in place from time to time (ie. by Public Health).
2. The Home does not have visiting hours, however, visitors are asked to respect resident mealtimes and acknowledge that residents may not wish early morning or late night visits.
3. All visitors are expected to screen themselves before attending the Home to ensure they are not presenting with symptoms compatible with any illness. If they are, they must stay home.
4. All visitors must enter through the front door and complete the visitor log. Records of those attending the Home is maintained at the Home for a minimum of one month.
5. All visitors must follow the protocols of the Home. For example, the COVID pandemic required all those entering the Home to abide by the current masking, testing, vaccination, etc. requirements. Any visitor found to not be following the established guideline may result in a discontinuation or alteration of visiting rights.

Essential Caregiver Program:

1. A person may become an essential caregiver in order to provide direct care to their loved one if they:
 - a. Are at least 16 years of age. If an individual under 16 will be designated as an ECG, the individual's parent or guardian must sign the agreement form.
 - b. Have reviewed and understand the Home's education package
 - c. Have signed off on the Essential Caregiver Agreement Form
2. Each resident may have 4 ECGs designated to them, unless they had more ECGs designated before December 15th, 2021, in which case that number of ECGs remains intact. Individuals can transfer their ECG designation to another individual, provided the individual remains designated for a minimum of 30 days.
3. Interested individuals are requested to contact the Life Enrichment Coordinator (LEC). The LEC will email them a copy of the education package, or provide a physical copy, and set up a time to sign the Essential Caregiver Agreement form.
4. The completed form is filed in the resident's chart.

General Visiting Policies:

1. There is no restriction on number of visitors, however, guest limits for the specific room must be followed.
2. ECGs may visit with their loved one in their loved one's room, in a common area (as space will allow) or outdoors. If the visit will be taking place in a shared resident room, visitors must be respectful of the co-resident's wishes for their privacy and find an alternate visiting location, if necessary.

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3. If the resident is isolating, the Home is in outbreak or during a pandemic or epidemic:
 - a. Only essential visitors are permitted to attend the Home. They will be required to follow applicable protocols including but not limited to: showing proof of applicable vaccination or other required records at each visit; having a rapid antigen test completed in accordance with the Home's policies; donning and doffing PPE according to training provided and posted signage; and any other protocols the Home and/or Public Health may deem is appropriate.
 - b. General visitors are not permitted to enter the Home during outbreak or when their loved one is in isolation, or at other times when visitor restrictions are mandated (ie. by the Ministry of Long-Term Care during a pandemic).
 - c. Registered Staff are available to provide training/reminders and/or support visitors to don and doff PPE, including where to dispose of items after use.

PART 3:

Definitions:

Essential Caregiver – an individual designated by a resident or their substitute decision maker who provides direct care/support to a specific resident: assistance with meals; personal care and activities of daily living; emotional support and cognitive stimulation

Essential Visitor – means:

- A caregiver (as above)
- 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.

Appendices:

- (A) Essential Caregiver Education Package
- (B) Essential Caregiver Agreement Form