

100-LTC COMMUNITY ADMINISTRATION	
POLICY NO: LTC-CA-ON-100-05-20	SECTION TITLE: Risk Management
	POLICY TITLE: Visitor Policy
EFFECTIVE DATE: June 2022	AUTHORIZED BY: Executive Committee
	REVISION DATES: March 2023, July 2023, November 2023

PURPOSE

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

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.

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

DEFINITIONS

“AgeCare”, “we” or “us” means AgeCare and its affiliates and subsidiaries. “AgeCare” includes properties and entities that are jointly owned by AgeCare and third parties, as well as properties that are managed by AgeCare.

“Employee” means every individual working or volunteering at an AgeCare corporate office or retirement residence or long-term care residence operated and/or managed by AgeCare.

“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 requirements.

“Essential Visitors” means

- (a) A caregiver
- (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) A government inspector with a statutory right to enter a long-term care home to carry out their duties.

“Caregivers” means an individual who,

- (a) Is a family member or friend of a resident or a person of importance to a resident,
- (b) Is able to comply with all applicable laws including any applicable directives, orders, guidance, advice or recommendations issued by the Chief Medical Officer of Health or a medical officer of health appointed under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act*,
- (c) Provides one or more forms of support or assistance to meet the needs of the resident, including providing direct physical support such as activities of daily living or providing social, spiritual or emotional support, wither on a paid or unpaid basis,
- (d) Is designated by the resident or the resident’s substitute decision-maker with authority to give that designation, if any, and
- (e) In the case of an individual under 16 years of age, has approval from a parent or legal guardian to be designated as a caregiver.

“Support Workers” are individuals who perform essential support services for the care community or for a resident (e.g., physicians, nurse practitioners, maintenance workers, person delivering food, provided they are not staff of the LTC home/care community as defined in the LTCHA).

“Government inspectors” includes individuals who are inspectors under the LTCHA, the Health Protection and Promotion Act, and the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

“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.

SCOPE

This policy applies to AgeCare Long Term Care Homes in Ontario

POLICY

LTC homes are responsible for supporting residents in receiving visitors during non-outbreak situations and during 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.

Homes are also required to comply with all applicable laws including any applicable directives, orders guidance, advice or recommendations issued by the Chief Medical Officer of Health, or a medical officer of health appointed under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act*.

Homes must have a process for documenting and keeping a written record of,

- i. The designation of a caregiver; and
- ii. The approval from a parent or legal guardian to permit persons under 16 years of age to be designated as a caregiver, if applicable.

Homes are to ensure that essential visitors continue to have access to the long-term care home during an outbreak of a communicable disease, and outbreak of a disease of public health significance, and epidemic or a pandemic, subject to any applicable laws.

Homes must maintain visitor logs for a minimum of 30 days which include, at a minimum,

- (a) The name and contact information of the visitor,
- (b) The time and date of the visit; and
- (c) The name of the resident visited.

Homes must ensure that the current version of the visitor policy is provided to the Residents' Council and Family Council, if any. Homes must ensure that all visitors have access to the home's visitor policy.

CROSS REFERENCE

LTC-CA-ON-205-02-13 Entrance Screening

LTC-CA-WQ-100-05-13 Building Security

ALL-CA-ALL-505-04-08 Sign In-Out Register

PROCEDURES

Access to the Home

All visitors to the home must receive education/training on physical distancing, respiratory etiquette, hand hygiene, IPAC practices, and proper use of PPE. Homes are to provide a copy and review with visitors the *LTC-CA-ON-100-09-35 Infection Prevention and Control Handout for Visitors* prior to their first visit. Additional educational resources are available on the Public Health Ontario website: <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/diseases-and-conditions/infectious-diseases/respiratory-diseases/novel-coronavirus/long-term-care-resources>.

There are no limits to the number of visitors permitted for indoor or outdoor visits. Capacity is determined by the available space and following applicable guidance and laws.

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

Essential Visitors

- There are no limits to the 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 the home or when a resident has failed screening, is symptomatic or in isolation. In these situations, Public Health will provide direction on the number of essential caregivers that may visit at a time.

General Visitors

- General visitors are not permitted to visit:
 - When a home or area of a home is in outbreak
 - To visit an isolating resident
 - When the local public health unit so directs.
- General visitors younger than 14 years of age should be accompanied by an adult and must follow all applicable public health measures that are in place at the home (e.g., screening, hand hygiene, masking for source control).

Caregiver Designation

- The decision to designate an individual as an essential caregiver is at the discretion and request of the resident and/or SDM. The home will not partake or interfere in this decision-making process.
- All caregivers need to be designated in writing by using the *LTC-CA-ON-100-09-34 Caregiver Designation Form* and designated caregivers will be identified in the Point Click Care database for the resident.
- Essential caregivers must be at least 16 years of age. In the case of an individual under 16 years of age, they must have written approval from a parent or legal guardian to be designated as a caregiver.

- The resident and/or SDM may substitute the individuals who are designated as essential caregivers in response to changes in the resident's care needs that are reflected in the plan of care or to changes in the availability of a designated caregiver (temporary or permanent). They will not be permitted to make frequent changes in order to increase the number of visitors when restrictions to visitors are in place.

Visitor Logs

- Homes to designate one point of entry and maintain one registry of all visitors entering the property to fill out the visitor register. Refer to the *ALL-CA-ALL-505-04-08 Sign In and Out Register*.
Exception: Under normal operating conditions home staff will use the electronic staff tracking for arriving and leaving their shifts and residents will be asked to sign in and out on their neighbourhoods.
- During 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 the log may be adjusted to include additional screening, testing and requirements as deemed necessary by the Minister of Health or the local Public Health unit.
- Homes to maintain all logs for a minimum of 30 days.

Screening

Currently Effective – Homes are required to establish and communicate an operational plan including guidance for staff, students, volunteers, support workers, caregivers and general visitors to self-monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 (passive screening).

Individuals should be provided with information (for example, screening questions) to monitor their health at home for COVID-19 symptoms and inform them that they are not permitted to enter the home if they are feeling ill or would otherwise fail screening.

Signage should be posted at entrances and throughout the home that lists the signs and symptoms of COVID-19, for self-monitoring and steps that must be taken if COVID-19 is suspected or confirmed in any individual.

Active Screening

- Active screening includes some form of attestation/confirmation of screening. This is achieved through in-person or pre-arrival submission of online screening where applicable.
- During an outbreak of a communicable disease or an outbreak of a disease of public health significance, an epidemic or a pandemic, homes are required to follow screening requirements as directed by the Ministry of Health.
- When active screening is required, the home must have a dedicated person ensuring that all people entering the home are actively screened. Individuals must be trained on the screening requirements.
- Screening questions will be updated to reflect current guidance provided by the Ministry of Health.
- If a visitor fails to participate in active screening or fails screening, they will not be permitted to enter the home.

Exceptions: (i) Paramedics/first responders visiting in an emergency situation should be permitted entry without screening. (ii) If a visitor visiting at end-of-life fails screening, they are still permitted entry but must wear a medical mask, maintain physical distance from other residents and staff and be restricted to the resident's room. (iii) If a staff member is returning on test-to-work protocols.

- The home is encouraged to set up a schedule for completing audits of the screening set-up and screening process.
- Homes are to refer to the Active Screening Protocol and the Screening Logs for Visitors and Residents.

Passive Screening

- Passive screening means that those entering the home will review screening questions themselves, and there is not verification of screening (for example, signage at entrances as a visual reminder not to enter if symptomatic).
- All homes should have information posted on the entrance that inform visitors to not visit if they are feeling unwell. All individuals should self-screen before working, attending or visiting a long-term care home.

Surveillance Testing

- The requirement for asymptomatic screen testing has been removed for all staff, students, volunteers, support workers, caregivers and general visitors entering the home.
- The requirement to initiate asymptomatic screen testing will be done in conjunction with Ministry of Long-Term Care Directives and Public Health direction.

Visit Requirements

1. Masking

- Masks are strongly recommended for visitors and caregivers in resident areas indoors except when with the resident in the resident's room or when eating or drinking with a resident in communal spaces. PPE, including masks, will be required when visiting a resident who is in isolation under droplet or droplet and contact precautions.
- Exceptions to the masking requirements are:
 - Children younger than two years of age
 - Any individual who is being accommodated in accordance with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* or the *Ontario Human Rights Code*.
 - If entertainment provided by a live performer (that is, a visitor) requires the removal of their mask to perform their talent.

2. Physical Distancing

- As continuity of activities is essential to the mental health and wellbeing of residents, homes can hold activities without adjusting to optimize for physical distancing. Home, with guidance from Public Health units, are best positioned to structure activities based on staff capacity and the individual home and resident population.

3. Activities

- Caregivers and general visitors may accompany a resident for meals and may now join in sharing a meal with their loved one(s) in communal dining areas.
- Caregivers and general visitors may join residents during activities, both indoors and outdoors, including enjoying food and beverages during group activities, unless otherwise directed by the local public health.

Responding to Non-Adherence by Visitors

Any non-adherence to this protocol will be the basis for discontinuation of visits or caregiving. The home recognizes that visits and caregiving are critical in supporting a resident's care needs and emotional wellbeing. The home will consider the impact that discontinuing visits will have on the resident and will make every reasonable effort to ensure that any disruption to visiting/caregiving is reflective and proportionate to the severity of the non-adherence.

The home will include the Residents' Council and Family Council on procedures for addressing non-adherence by visitors/caregivers.

The home will provide all visitors with education explaining the necessary requirements and will ensure that visitors are provided with the sufficient time and resources to adhere to the requirements. If a visitor demonstrates repeated incidents of non-adherence, the home may end a visit or temporarily prohibit the visitor from coming into the home.

The Administrator will make the final determination to discontinue visiting/caregiving and will advise the visitor/caregiver of this finding in writing. The home will indicate the timeframe in which the visitor is not able to visit the home. Records will be kept by the home of all incidents where discontinuation of visits has been exercised.

If the home is prohibiting an essential caregiver from coming into the home, the resident and/or SDM may need to designate an alternate individual as caregiver to assist with meeting the needs of the resident.

When the home reinvokes a visitor's/caregiver's privileges, the home will provide additional education to the visitor/caregiver prior to their resumption of visiting in the home.

FORMS

LTC-CA-ON-100-09-34 Caregiver Designation Form

LTC-CA-ON-100-09-35 Infection Prevention and Control Handout for Visitors

AUDIT INDICATORS

NA

RESOURCES

[Minister's Directive: COVID-19 Response Measures for Long-Term Care Homes](#)

[Covid-19 Guidance Document for Long-Term Care Homes](#)

Ontario Fixing Long Term Act, 2021, S.O. 2021, c.39, Sched. 1

O. Reg. 246/22/10: General

[Ministry of Health COVID-19 Guidance for Public Health Units: Long Term Care Homes, Retirement Homes, and Other Congregate Living Settings](#)