

Title: Visitors Policy	Policy Number: XIV-10.10
Department: Nursing Department	Current Version Review Date: May 12, 2023
Manual Owner: IPAC Manual	Original Policy Date: May 29, 2022
Attachment(s):	Current Version Reviewed By: QI Lead & RHA Manager

PURPOSE:

The home has established and implemented a written visitor policy as required under Ontario Regulation 246/22 made under the Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021 (s. 267. (1) and Directive #3. This policy is periodically updated to meet requirements of all applicable legislation

PROCEDURE:

This policy is effective March 31, 2023. All previous versions of the visiting policy are revoked and replaced with this version.

VISITORS' ACCESS TO THE HOME'S VISITOR POLICY

The Long-Term Care Home must:

- Provide a copy of Visitors Policy to Residents' Council and Family Council (if any)
- A copy of Visitors Policy must be included with Resident Information Package
- Post Visitors Policy in the Home
- Communicate Visitors Policy to residents, families, and staff
- Post Visitors Policy on LTC home's website

COVID-19 VACCINATION

COVID-19 vaccination continues to be recommended; however, the requirement is removed.

REQUIREMENTS

Residents have a right under the Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021 (<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/21f39>), 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:

- **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** – welcoming visitors is intended to support the mental and 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 and infrastructure characteristics of the home, its workforce or 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
- **equality** – residents have the right to choose their visitors. In addition, residents or their substitute decision-makers, as applicable, have the authority to designate caregivers

2. In accordance with section 267(2) of O. Reg. 246/22, homes must maintain visitor logs of all visits to the home. 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.

The visitor log must include, at a minimum:

- the name and contact information of the visitor
- time and date of the visit
- the purpose of the visit (for example, the name of resident visited)

3. Homes must ensure that all visitors have access to the home’s visitor policy.

4. Homes must provide education or training to all visitors about physical distancing, respiratory etiquette, hand hygiene, IPAC practices, and proper use of PPE.

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 one are also not considered visitors and are excluded from testing requirements.

ESSENTIAL VISITORS

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.

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

- a caregiver, as defined under section 4 of O. Reg. 246/22
- 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

Caregivers – scheduling and length and frequency of visits

Homes may not require scheduling or restrict the length or frequency of visits by caregivers.

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

Caregivers who want to volunteer to support more than one resident

- In the event of an outbreak, caregivers may support up to two residents who are COVID-19 positive, provided the home obtains consent from all involved residents (or their substitute decision makers)
- caregivers may also support more than one resident in non-outbreak situations, with the same expectation regarding resident consent

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

All general visitors, including children under the age of five, can enter the long-term care home. General visitors, with the exception of the children under the age of five, will need to follow the vaccination policy of the individual long-term care home.

There are no ministry limits on the number of visitors (including caregivers) that a resident may visit with at a time for indoor or outdoor visits. 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 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 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

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.

COVID-19 PASSIVESCREENING OF VISITORS

Passive Screening:

All visitors regardless of vaccination status, must conduct passive screening for COVID-19 upon entry of the Long-Term Care Home. Passive screening means that all individuals entering the long-term care home or retirement home should self-monitor for COVID-19 symptoms at home and review the COVID-19 screening themselves. Passive screening should be continuous (e.g., before entering and while working/visiting the LTC/RH). Please refer to the Passive Screening poster and the Ministry of Health Management of Cases and Contacts of COVID-19 in Ontario for more information:

https://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/contact_mngmt/management_cases_contacts.pdf.

Homes are not to prohibit visitors for palliative end-of-life residents. If these individuals fail screening, they must be permitted entry, but homes must ensure that they wear a medical (surgical or procedural) mask and maintain physical distance from other residents and staff.

Asymptomatic Screen Testing:

Per the Minister's Directive, the requirement for asymptomatic screen testing has been removed for all staff, students, volunteers, support workers, caregivers and general visitors entering long-term care homes.

EDUCATION/TRAINING REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL VISITORS

Education package will be provided to all visitors via contact information annually and must be reviewed by all visitors prior to first visit and annually.

The following topics are included in the Education Package to visitors:

- respiratory etiquette
- hand hygiene
- IPAC practices
- proper use of PPE

PROVISIONS REGARDING HOME'S IMPLEMENTATION OF ALL REQUIRED PUBLIC HEALTH MEASURES AND INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL PRACTICES (IPAC)

The importance of ongoing adherence to strong and consistent IPAC processes and practices cannot be overstated. The home strives to prevent and limit the spread of COVID-19 by ensuring that strong and consistent IPAC practices are implemented and continuously reviewed. Appropriate and effective IPAC practices must be carried out by all people attending or living in the home, at all times, regardless of whether there are cases of COVID-19 in the home or not, and regardless of the vaccination status of an individual.

IPAC audits

- The Homes required to complete IPAC audits at least every two weeks unless in outbreak.
- When the Home is in outbreak the IPAC audits are completed at least weekly.
- IPAC audits are rotated across shifts, including evenings and weekends.

- At minimum, homes must include in their audit the PHO's COVID-19: Self Assessment Audit Tool for Long-Term Care Homes and Retirement Homes. Results of the IPAC audit should be kept for at least 30 days and shared with inspectors upon request

MASKING AND EYE PROTECTION

Masking remains a requirement for long-term care staff, as well as for visitors and others entering long-term care homes. The ministry recommends (but no longer requires) visitors to wear masks when they are alone with a resident in their room.

For residents living in shared rooms, homes should seek to designate a space to enable residents to interact with their visitors without masks. When not in a one-on-one setting with a resident in their room or a designated space within the home, visitors and caregivers are required to be masked. Masks are not required outdoors for visitors (general or essential).

For visitors, the removal of masks for the purposes of eating should be restricted to areas designated by the home (which may include a resident's room (if private)).

REFERENCES:

- Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021 <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/21f39>
- Regulations under the Act: O. Reg. 246/22 <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/21f39>
- Minister's Directive <https://www.ontario.ca/page/ministers-directive-covid-19-response-measures-for-long-term-care-homes>,
- COVID-19 Guidance document for long term care homes in Ontario https://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/LTCH_RH_guidance_PHU.pdf