

Visitors Policy	Policy Number: 10-14.00
Department: Nursing	Current Version Review Date: July 3, 2024
Manual Owner: IPAC Manual	Original Policy Date: May 29, 2024
Attachment(s): Education Package for visitors	Current Version Reviewed By: IPAC-LEAD, Manager of Quality and Compliance

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). This policy is periodically updated to meet the requirements of all applicable legislation

PROCEDURE:

This policy is effective April 19, 2024. All previous versions of the visiting policy are revoked and replaced with this version.

Currently, there are no COVID-specific or any pathogen-specific requirements or restrictions related to visitors when not in outbreak.

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 status of the home concerning 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.

As per Public Health Ontario (PHO) as published February 2023, all visitors are to follow most relevant infection prevention and control when visiting their loved ones in the home to minimize or stop transmission of diseases. You can do this by ...

- **Screen before entering the home.** If you do not feel well, you should not visit. Screening may include answering questions in advance or at the entrance doorways. Examples) Are you experiencing a cough, sore throat, nausea, diarrhea or other symptoms of concerns?
- **Keep your hands clean** by utilizing alcohol hand-based sanitization or soap and water and moisturization. Clean hands before coming into the

home and on exit; before entering and leaving resident's room/environment; before and after putting on a mask, gloves, or eye protection (if required); before and after eating, using the washroom or blowing nose. Whenever hands are visibly soiled/dirty, wash them with soap and water before/after providing care.

- **Do not** share food, drinks or other items to other residents, staff or families.
- **Practice** physical distancing from others whenever possible, and practice respiratory etiquette (see below).
- **Cough Etiquette** - Cough and sneeze into a tissue and dispose immediately. Sanitize hands.
- **Visitors are expected** to follow precautions in place at each visited home area, including practicing hand hygiene (as noted above).

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 (ECPs) are persons performing essential support services (e.g., food delivery, inspectors, maintenance or health care services or persons visiting a change in health status i.e. extremely ill or on compassionate grounds, i.e. palliative/end-of-life (EOL).

Essential visitors are permitted regardless of vaccination status and 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.

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 in respiratory or enteric isolation, 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. During outbreaks, directions are followed closely by the local public health (Toronto Public Health) unit which may include advising general visitors to postpone all non-essential visits.

ACCESS TO HOMES

All general visitors, including children under the age of five, can enter the 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.

RESTRICTIONS DURING OUTBREAKS OR WHEN A RESIDENT IS ON ADDITIONAL PRECAUTIONS

Home must follow the direction from their local public health unit during an outbreak, which may include advising general visitors to postpone all non-essential visits to residents within the outbreak area for the duration of the outbreak. If only a portion of the home is in an outbreak, residents unaffected by that outbreak may still have visitors.

Visitors are required to comply with any masking/PPE requirements as appropriate during outbreaks or if the resident is on additional precautions.

Essential visitors are permitted when there is an outbreak in a home or area of a home or when a resident is symptomatic or in isolation. Essential visitors include caregivers, support workers and people visiting very ill residents or residents receiving end-of-life care, and GOVERNMENT INSPECTORS WITH STATUTORY RIGHT OF ENTRY. Essential caregivers/visitors should be educated on the potential risk of exposure when visiting a symptomatic resident.

All visitors will need to report to the nursing desk in the respective unit to discuss precautions before entering a resident's room.

If an essential caregiver/visitor is symptomatic, they are recommended not to enter the setting.

There are no restrictions for visits on compassionate grounds to support visitation by essential caregivers/visitors of patients who are at the end-of-life.

Individuals such as maintenance workers, contractors, or engineers, who provide support to the critical operations of the home, including performing critical maintenance services necessary to comply with applicable laws, are considered support workers and permitted to enter a home during an outbreak.

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.

Physical Distancing and Cohorting:

Currently, there are no specific requirements or restrictions related to physical distancing or cohorting when not an outbreak.

PASSIVE SCREENING OF VISITORS

Passive Screening:

All visitors regardless of vaccination status, must conduct passive screening for symptoms 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 symptoms of illness at home. Passive screening should be continuous (e.g., before entering and while working/visiting the LTC/RH). 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 distancing 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 Best Practices
- Proper use of PPE

REFERENCES:

- Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021
<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/21f39> Regulations under the Act of O. Reg 244/22
[Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021, S.O. 2021, c. 39, Sched. 1 \(ontario.ca\)](#)
- Ministry of Health (2024, April). *Recommendations for Outbreak Prevention and Control in Institution and Congregate Living Settings*. Wwww.Ontario.ca. Retrieved July 5, 2024, from <https://www.ontario.ca/files/2024-04/moh-recommendations-for-outbreak-prevention-and-control-in-institutions-and-clc-en-2024-04-09.pdf>