

COVID-19 Visitor Policy for Heidehof

This COVID-19 Visitor Policy is provided to implement requirements in order that residents may safely receive visitors while protecting residents, staff and visitors from the risk of COVID-19. This policy is effective on March 14, 2022. All previous versions of the visiting policy are revoked and replaced with this version.

As the COVID-19 outbreak evolves, direction on LTC home visits will be adjusted as necessary, keeping the safety and well-being of residents and staff at the forefront.

2.0 Guiding Principles

There is an ongoing need to protect LTC home residents and staff from the risk of COVID-19, particularly as LTC home residents are more susceptible to infection from COVID-19 than the general population due to their age and medical condition. Rules for LTC home visits continue to be in place to protect the health and safety of residents, staff and visitors, while supporting residents in receiving the care they need and maintaining their emotional well-being. These rules are in addition to the requirements established in the LTCHA and Ontario Regulation 79/10.

The Home's COVID-19 Visitor Policy is built upon the following principles:

1. **Safety:** Any approach to visiting must balance the health and safety needs of residents, staff, and visitors, and ensure risks are mitigated. This includes:
 - Close alignment with pandemic Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) best practices.
 - Ensuring practices are both proactive to community transmission levels and reactive to facility outbreaks.
2. **Holistic:** The holistic needs of the resident are considered in the development and implementation of the visitation and essential caregiving plan. Allowing visitors is intended to support the emotional well-being of residents by reducing any potential negative impacts related to social isolation.
3. **Equitable Access:** All individuals seeking to visit or provide essential caregiving support to a resident must be given equitable visitation access, consistent with resident preference and within reasonable restrictions that safeguard residents. The approach must be operationally sustainable.
4. **Flexibility:** The physical/infrastructure characteristics of the long-term care home, its staffing availability, and the current

5. **Status** of the home with respect to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) are all variables to take into account when setting home-specific policies.

3.0 The Home's Responsibilities

The Home is responsible for supporting residents in receiving visitors while mitigating the risk of exposure to COVID-19. Further, they are responsible for establishing and implementing visiting practices that comply with the guidance of Public Health.

The Home is also responsible for maintaining a list of visitors that is available for staff to readily access.

Furthermore, the Home is responsible to ensure this policy is communicated to the Residents and Families through their respective councils, family email, the home's website and any other means deemed suitable.

4.0 Types of Visitors

There are several types of visitors that may visit the Home and the types and definitions are explained as follows:

4.1 Those Not Considered Visitors LTC home staff, volunteers and placement students are not considered visitors as their access to the home is determined by Heidehof.

4.2 Essential Visitors Essential visitors are defined as those persons who are in the Home to perform an essential support service (e.g., food delivery, Inspectors, maintenance contractors, or health care services providers such as a lab technician) OR a person visiting a very ill or palliative resident.

For further clarity, essential visitors include support workers and caregivers as defined in this policy. However, an essential visitor does not need to be a support worker or caregiver, as long as they meet the definition under Directive #3 and defined in this policy.

- **Support workers** are a type of essential visitor who are visiting to perform essential support services for the home or for a resident at the home. Examples of support workers include physicians, nurse practitioners, maintenance workers or a person delivering food, provided they are not staff of the LTC home as defined in the LTCHA.
- **Caregivers** are a type of essential visitor who is designated by the resident and/or their substitute decision-maker and is visiting to provide direct care to the resident (e.g., supporting feeding, mobility, personal hygiene, cognitive stimulation, communication, meaningful connection, relational continuity and assistance in decision-making).

→ Caregivers must be at least 18 years of age.

→ A maximum of 2 caregivers may be designated per resident at a time. The designation is to be made in writing to the Home by emailing the Director of Care or Designate. A list of caregiver designations will be readily accessible to staff. The decision to designate an individual as a caregiver is entirely the remit of the resident and/or their substitute decision-maker and not the home.

→ A resident and/or their substitute decision-maker may change a designation in response to a change in the resident's care needs that are reflected in the plan of care or on the availability of a designated caregiver, either temporary (e.g., illness) or permanent.

→ Examples of caregivers include family members who provide meaningful connection, a privately hired caregiver, paid companions, and translators.

Please note: Government inspectors are essential visitors under Directive #3; however, they are not subject to this policy.

3. **General Visitors** A general visitor is a person who is not an essential visitor and is visiting:
- To provide non-essential services, who may or may not be hired by the Home or the resident and/or their substitute decision maker; and/or,
 - For social reasons (e.g., family members or friends) that the resident or their substitute decision-maker assess as different from direct care, including care related to cognitive stimulation, meaningful connection and relational continuity.

5.0 Access to the Home and Outbreak Areas

Essential visitors are the only type of visitors allowed when a resident is self-isolating or symptomatic, or the home is in an outbreak. During an outbreak, and/or a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19, the local public health unit will provide additional direction on visitors to the home, depending on the specific situation.

5.1 Essential Visitors Visits for essential visitors are permitted as follows, subject to direction from the local public health unit:

- Any number of support workers may visit a home, scheduled in advance with the Home
- Where the home is not in an outbreak:
 - If the resident is not self-isolating or symptomatic, a maximum of 2 caregiver and 2 general visitors per resident may be allowed to visit a resident at a time.
 - If the resident is self-isolating or symptomatic, a maximum of 1 caregiver per resident may visit at a time

- **Where the home is in an outbreak:**

→ A maximum of 1 caregiver per resident may visit at a time

A caregiver may not visit any other resident or Home for 14 days after visiting another:

- Resident who is self-isolating or symptomatic; and/or
- Home in an outbreak.

5.2 General Visitors Each resident may have a maximum of 4 visitors to visit at a time (subject to direction from the local public health unit) provided:

- The resident is not self-isolating or symptomatic; and,
- The home is not in an outbreak.

General visitors younger than 14 years of age should be accompanied by an adult and must be able to follow all applicable infection prevention and control (IPAC) precautions that are in place at the Home.

The Home reserves the right to limit the number of visitors or visits at any time based on the spread of COVID-19 in the community and any risk factors that community transmission may present to the residents of the Home.

6.0 Screening Requirements and Vaccination Requirements

ALL types of visitors will be subject to these screening requirements:

- Visitors will be actively screened on entry for symptoms and exposures for COVID-19, including temperature checks and will not be admitted if they do not pass the screening.
- All visitors must be fully vaccinated (meaning two full doses of a recognized Covid-19 vaccine and it has been 14 days after the last dose)
- Visitors under 1 year may visit without vaccination for Covid-19.
- Visitors between 1-5 will not be permitted to visit indoors if not vaccinated.

Essential/Caregiver Visitors:

- will also be required to have a negative rapid test prior to their visit and must wait for results prior to going to see the resident. Rapid testing is required each time a visit takes place.

In addition, there are additional screening requirements for certain types of visitors:

6.1 Support Workers Support workers are required to have a negative rapid test or show proof of a negative rapid test on the day of the visit. The Home will provide the testing. Where a support worker requires immediate access to the home in an emergency (e.g., building emergency or end-of-life visitor), the home does not need to rapid test.

6.2 Caregivers Caregivers are required to have a negative rapid test prior to visiting a resident on the day of the visit.

Prior to visiting any resident for the first time after this policy is released and monthly thereafter, the Home will ask caregivers to verbally attest to the home that they have read/re-read the home's visitor policy.

Prior to visiting any resident for the first time after this policy is released and monthly thereafter, the Home will provide training to caregivers that addresses at a minimum how to safely provide direct care, including putting on and taking off required PPE, and hand hygiene.

6.3 General Visitors the Home will require general visitors who are visiting outdoors to pass the screening questions before going to the outdoor patio.

7.0 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and Education

All Visitors will wear appropriate PPE for the circumstance of their visit and will participate in the required education as per this policy. At a minimum, appropriate PPE for a visitor is a surgical/procedural mask for the duration of the visit, unless the home/unit is in outbreak, then full ppe may be required.(Mask,gown,eye protection and gloves,

7.1 Essential Visitors The Home is responsible for providing surgical/procedure masks, gloves, gowns and eye protection (i.e. face shield or goggles) for essential visitors.

7.2 General Visitors General visitors are responsible for bringing their own cloth mask or face covering for outdoor visits. Homes are responsible for providing surgical/procedure masks for general visitors for indoor visits.

Important note: If at any time, the Home is not able to provide the appropriate PPE to a visitor, then the visitor will not be able to enter the Home. Essential visitors who are support workers and who are provided with appropriate PPE from their employer may enter the Home.

7.3 Education The following topics will be required components of the training and education of caregivers and general visitors:

- Guidance document entitled *Recommended Steps: Putting on Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)*

<https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/ipac/pppe-recommended-steps>

- Video entitled *Putting on Full Personal Protective Equipment*.
<https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/videos/ipac-fullppe-on>
- Video entitled *Taking off Full Personal Protective Equipment*.
<https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/videos/ipac-fullppe-off>
- Video entitled *How to Hand Wash*.
<https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/videos/ipac-handwash>

8.0 Managing Safe Visits

8.1 Caregivers The Home may not require scheduling, or restrict the length or frequency, of visits by caregivers. The Home does, however, require the Resident or caregiver to provide them with a schedule of the caregiver visits in advance for the purposes of being able to carry out the requirements of this policy such as availability of staff for screening and availability of PPE.

If at any time, the Home cannot accommodate the number of caregivers requesting access, the Home will reserve the right to put a schedule in place for caregivers in order to provide fair and equitable access to all those who are requesting visits. Caregivers will be notified in advance of any scheduling change to their visits and will be expected to comply with the changes so that everyone has a chance to visit. The Home will not place unreasonable limits on the number of caregivers on any given day, but these limits may change from time to time based on the rate of community transmission and spread for the safety of the residents and staff.

8.2 General Visitors

The Home has the discretion to require general visitors to:

- Schedule their visits in advance for indoor and/or outdoor visits.
- Limit the length of the visit
- Limit the frequency of visits; however, The Home will allow at least one visit per resident per week.

When scheduling visits, The Home should consider the:

- Needs of residents, including their clinical and emotional well-being.
- The total number of visitors in the home.

The Home has the discretion to determine where visits from general visitors may be held (e.g., dedicated outdoor area, inside the resident's room, specified indoor area, etc.). In determining the location of visits, homes should consider:

- Staffing capacity for transferring residents into and out of the visiting location, and escorting general visitors to the visiting location.

- Space available in the location for physical distancing.

8.3 Supervising Visits The Home is not required to supervise visits however, it is the policy of the Home to have the discretion to supervise visits in order to manage health and safety during visits (e.g., monitoring the flow of visitors to ensure sufficient physical distancing can be maintained, supporting residents during the visit, etc.). Where the Home needs to supervise visits, the supervision will be implemented in a manner that respects the resident's right to communicate in confidence, receive visitors of their choice and consult in private with any person without interference under paragraph 14 of subsection 3(1) of the LTCHA.

8.4 Types of Visits

- **Outdoor** visits will take place in the main courtyard and must be booked in advance by calling the Life Enrichment Manager – Heather Vokey. Visitors will enter through the front door and be screened on entry prior to going to the courtyard.
- **Indoor** visits will take place in the resident's room. Visitors will enter through the main entrance of the Home and be screened on arrival.
- **Caregiver** visits will take place in the resident's home area in the resident's room, dining area and common areas as long as physical distancing is maintained with others. The garden area can also be visited during times that outdoor visits are not occurring.

9.0 Non-adherence by Visitors

9.1 Responding to Non-Adherence by Visitors There will be a process in place for responding to non-adherence by visitors in the Home. The Home will first:

- Provide strategies for supporting visitors in understanding and adhering to the Home's visitor policy.
- Recognize visits are critical to supporting a resident's care needs and emotional well-being.
- Consider the impact of discontinuing visits on the resident's clinical and emotional well-being.
- Reflect and ensure it is proportionate to the severity of the nonadherence.

Where the Home has previously ended a visit by, or temporarily prohibited a visitor, they will specify any education/ training the visitor may need to complete before visiting the home again in order to protect residents, staff and visitors in the home from the risk of COVID-19.

The Home will consult with the Residents' Council and the Family Council in the Home on procedures for addressing non-adherence by visitors.

9.2 Ending a Visit The Home has the discretion to end a visit by any visitor who repeatedly fails to adhere to the home's visitor policy, provided:

- The home has explained the applicable requirement(s) to the visitor;

- The visitor has the resources to adhere to the requirement(s) (e.g., there is sufficient space to physically distance, the home has supplied the PPE and demonstrated how to correctly put on PPE, etc.); and
- The visitor has been given sufficient time to adhere to the requirement(s).

The Home will document all instances where they have ended a visit due to non-adherence.

9.3 Temporarily Prohibiting a Visitor the Home has 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, The Home will consider whether the non-adherence:

- Can be resolved successfully by explaining and demonstrating how the visitor can adhere to the requirements.
- Is within requirements that align with instruction and guidance in this policy.
- Negatively impacts the health and safety of residents, staff, and other visitors in the home.
- Is demonstrated continuously by the visitor over multiple visits.
- Is by a visitor whose previous visits have been ended by the home.

Any decision to temporarily prohibit a visitor should:

- Be made only after all other reasonable efforts to maintain safety during visits have been exhausted.
- Stipulate a reasonable length of the prohibition.
- Clearly identify what requirements the visitor should meet before visits may be resumed (e.g., reviewing the home’s visitor policy, reviewing specific Public Health Ontario resources, etc.); and,
- Be documented by the home. Where the home has temporarily prohibited a caregiver, the resident and/or their substitute decision-maker may need to designate an alternate individual as caregiver to help meet the resident’s care needs.

10.0 Accessibility Considerations

Homes are required to meet all applicable laws such as the *Accessibility for Ontarians Disability Act, 2005*. <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/05a11>

REFERENCES:

Ministry of Health COVID-19 Directives & Resources

http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/dir_mem_res.aspx