

Memorandum

To: ORCA Members
From: Ontario Retirement Communities Association
Date: December 9, 2020
Re: Changes to the *Retirement Home COVID-19 Visiting Policy*

On December 9, the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility and Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority released an updated [Retirement Home COVID-19 Visiting Policy](#). The Ministry has aligned the escalation of precautions for homes with the provincial COVID-19 Response Framework. The implementation of components the Policy will be dependent whether your local public health unit is in Green (Prevent), Yellow (Protect), Orange (Restrict), Red (Control) or Grey (Lockdown). These measures will be used instead of Alert and High Alert statuses. Additional changes have been made in four key areas:

- Access to homes for different types of Support Workers;
- Access for Personal Care Service Providers;
- Social activities; and
- Tours.

Please note that these changes align with the recent changes to [Directive #3](#).

The changes to this policy are effective **December 11, 2020**.

A full summary of changes can be found below. Please note that where underlined text reflects a change or addition in the Policy.

Guiding Principles

- **Visitor Responsibility:** This has been added as a guiding principle. “Visitors have a crucial role to play in reducing risk and infection control for the safety of residents and staff by adhering to visitor policy requirements related to screening, IPAC and PPE and any precautions described in this policy or the visitor policy of the home.”

Requirements for Visits

- **Co-Located Policies:** In co-located long-term care and retirement homes that are not physically and operationally independent, the policies should align where possible or take the more restrictive visiting policy, unless otherwise advised by the local PHU based on their instructions for COVID-19 prevention and containment.
- **Spouses & Immediate Family Members:** In cases of spouses or immediate family members living in separate ‘homes’ of a co-located home, the visiting member must follow the policy of the home they are visiting based on whether the visitor is a General Visitor or a designated Caregiver. Wherever possible, it is recommended that the visitor

be designated as a caregiver to facilitate spousal and immediate family visits.

- **Record Keeping Protocols:** Minimum requirements have been introduced for keeping records of visitations for contract tracing purposes. These include name, contact information, date and time of visit, resident visited.
- **Physical Distancing:** If a retirement home is restricting visits based on physical distancing, these factors are expected to communicate that decision to residents and provide the reasons for the decision.

Types of Visitors

- **Not Considered Visitors:** The definition of retirement home staff and volunteers has been updated to reflect the definition of staff and volunteers as defined in the Retirement Homes Act, 2010.
- **Contract Workers:** The definition of contract workers has been expanded to include external care providers hired by the resident. The examples of contract workers have been expanded to include unregulated care providers.
- **Support Workers:** Authorized third parties who accommodate the needs of a resident with a disability has been added as a type of support worker.
- **Caregiver:** A resident may designate an external care provider as a Caregiver even though that individual would also be considered a Support Worker.
- **Definition of Personal Care Service Providers:** A Personal Care Service Provider is a person who is not an Essential Visitor and visits to provide non-essential personal services to residents such as hair dressing and nail care.

Access to Homes

- **Access to Homes:** Under Directive #3, homes must have a visitor policy that specifies that Essential Visitors are the only type of visitors allowed when a resident is self-isolating or symptomatic with COVID-19 symptoms, the home is in an outbreak, or is in a PHU included under Orange (Restrict), Red (Control) or Grey (Lockdown).
- **Frequency & Duration:** The requirement that a home's visitor policy should specify the frequency and duration of visits for essential visitors, while the home is in outbreak has been removed.
- **Local PHU Restrictions:** When a home is in outbreak or is in a PHU under Orange (Restrict), Red (Control) or Grey (Lockdown), the local PHU may also advise further restrictions on visitors in part or all of the home, depending on the specific situation. The home must abide by any restrictions imposed by a PHU.

- **Support Workers:**
 - Any number of Support Workers brought into the home to support IPAC or Health and Safety reasons are permitted (e.g., deep cleaning or emergency maintenance).
 - Any number of Support Workers who are care providers (e.g., regulated health care professionals or unregulated care providers) may visit a resident in a home at a time.
 - A maximum of 1 Support Worker who is not a care provider per resident may visit at a time where:
 - The home is in a PHU under Orange (Restrict), Red (Control) or Grey (Lockdown), the home is in an outbreak, or the resident is self-isolating or symptomatic.

- **Caregivers:**
 - A maximum of 2 Caregivers per resident may visit at a time where:
 - The home is not in a PHU under Orange (Restrict), Red (Control) or Grey (Lockdown), the home is not in an outbreak, and the resident is not self-isolating or symptomatic.
 - A maximum of 1 Caregiver per resident may visit at a time where:
 - The home is in a PHU under Orange (Restrict), Red (Control) or Grey (Lockdown) levels, the home is in an outbreak, or the resident is self-isolating or symptomatic.

- **Caregivers Living Together:** If 2 Caregivers live together, they may visit a resident at the same time when the home is in a PHU under Orange (Restrict), Red (Control), or Grey (Lockdown), the home is in outbreak, or the resident is self-isolating or symptomatic.

- **Local PHU Restrictions:** If a home is in outbreak, or in a PHU under Orange (Restrict), Red (Control) or Grey (Lockdown), the local PHU may recommend additional outbreak management control measures which may include restriction of Essential Visitors.

- **General Visitors:** A maximum of 2 General Visitors per resident may visit a resident at a time provided:
 - The resident is not self-isolating or symptomatic;
 - The home is not in a PHU under Orange (Restrict), Red (Control) or Grey (Lockdown); and
 - The home is not in an outbreak.

- **Facilitating General Visitors:** General visitors are not permitted for visits (indoors or outdoors) at homes in an outbreak or in a PHU under Orange (Restrict), Red (Control) or Grey (Lockdown) and may not visit residents that are self-isolating or symptomatic with COVID-19 symptoms. However, homes should ensure that residents are able to maintain contact with their loved ones (e.g., phone and virtual visits) when in an outbreak, in a PHU under Orange (Restrict), Red (Control) or Grey (Lockdown), or when residents are

self-isolating or symptomatic with COVID-19 symptoms.

- **Personal Care Service Providers:** A maximum of 1 Personal Care Service Provider per resident at a time may visit that resident provided:
 - The resident is not self-isolating or symptomatic;
 - The home is not in a PHU under Red (Control) or Grey (Lockdown); and
 - The home is not in an outbreak.
- **Single Site Personal Care Service Providers:** Personal Care Service Providers that support only one retirement home generally (e.g., provide services on-site at one location) may continue to visits homes in a PHU that is Orange (Restrict) if they follow required public health and IPAC measures for their trade and those of the home. Personal Care Service Providers are not permitted in homes in outbreak, or in PHUs under Red (Control) or Grey (Lockdown) and may not visit residents that are self-isolating or symptomatic with COVID-19 symptoms.

Screening

- **Safety Review – Essential Visitors:** Prior to visiting any resident in a home declared in outbreak for the first time after this policy is released, the home should provide training to Caregivers and Support Workers who are not trained as part of their service provision or through their employment that addresses how to safely provide direct care, including putting on and taking off required PPE, and hand hygiene. Alternatively, if the home does not provide the training, it must direct Caregivers and Support Workers to appropriate resources from [Public Health Ontario](#) to acquire this training.

Requirements for Absences

Short-Term Absences

- **Short-Term Absences:** Retirement home residents are permitted to leave the home for an absence that does not include an overnight stay (e.g., absences with friends or family, shopping, medical appointments, filling prescriptions, taking walks, etc.) with the exception of single-night emergency room visits, provided the following:
 - The home is not in an outbreak or in a PHU under Orange (Restrict), Red (Control) or Grey (Lockdown) at the same time the absence is to commence.
 - If a home allows absences but enters into an outbreak there should be a hold on starting new absences until the home is no longer in outbreak.
 - The local PHU has not directed the home to cease all short absences.
 - The home is compliant with all CMOH Directives and follows directions from the local PHU.
 - Upon return to the home, residents are actively screened and monitored for symptoms but are not required to be tested or self-isolate.
 - Residents must always wear a mask when outside of the home (if tolerated) and be reminded about the importance of public health measures including physical distancing. The resident is responsible for supplying a face covering/mask while

they are on absences. The home may, at its discretion, supply face covering/masks for absences.

- The home provides education on all required protocols for short absences, such as IPAC and PPE.
- **Walks & Essentials:** Retirement home residents in a home in a PHU under Orange (Restrict), Red (Control) or Grey (Lockdown) may be permitted to leave the home for walks or essentials (e.g., groceries, medical appointments, filling prescriptions), with the exception of also being permitted to leave for single-night emergency room visits. They must also meet the screening, face covering/masking, physical distancing and education requirements outlined above.
- **Overnight Absences:** A resident may leave for an absence that includes at least one overnight stay if the home meets the following requirements:
 - The retirement home is not in an outbreak.
 - If a home allows absences but enters into an outbreak, there should be a hold on starting new overnight absences until the home is no longer in outbreak.
 - Homes must establish compliance withal CMOH Directives for homes in outbreak and follow directions from the local PHU.
 - The home is not in a PHU under Orange (Restrict), Red (Control) or Grey (Lockdown).
 - Residents must wear a face covering/mask at all times when outside of the home (if tolerated) and be reminded about the importance of public health measures including physical distancing. The resident is responsible for supplying a face covering/mask while they are on absences. The home may, at its discretion, supply face coverings/masks for absences.
 - Education on all required protocols for short-term absences, such as IPAC and PPE, will be provided by the home to the resident prior to their absence.
 - Upon return to the home, residents must self-isolate for 14 days under Droplet and Contact Precautions but are not required to be tested upon re-entry to the home.
 - Residents who are self-isolating for 14-days following an overnight stay may not receive general visitors, leave the home for short-term absences or for overnight stays.

Requirements for New & Re-Admissions

Please refer to Directive #3 for requirements for new admissions and re-admissions.

Requirements for Social Activities

- **Social & Group Activities:** Provided that IPAC measures can be followed, residents may congregate for social and group activities for physical and mental stimulation if the home is not in an outbreak. The requirement that social activities halt for Alert & High Alert status has been removed.
- **Masking Policy:** Homes are required to have policies regarding masking for residents. It is strongly recommended that residents wear masks in common indoor areas in the

home, as tolerated. Homes are also required to follow any additional directions provided by the provincial government, the local public health unit or municipal bylaws.

- **Principles of Social & Group Activities:** Homes should apply these principles to group and social activities:
 - Prioritize mental and physical well-being of residents by offering stimulating inter-personal or shared activities.
 - Tailor activities to the home setting (physical structure) and reflect the range of abilities of residents.
 - Establish cohorts for activities, if appropriate.
 - Offer residents in isolation individualized activities and stimulation.

Requirements for Retirement Home Tours

- **Virtual Tours:** Virtual tours should be implemented as much as possible.
- **Targeted Tours:** For homes in a PHU under Orange (Restrict) or Red (Control), prospective residents may be offered targeted tours of empty suites at the final stage of the home selection process. General tours of the home, including common areas, should be virtual.
- **Restrictions on Tours:** All in-person targeted tours should be paused if a home goes into outbreak or is in a PHU under Grey (Lockdown).