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Policy: Visiting during a Pandemic

Purpose: To ensure a safe environment that follows provincially mandated protocols regarding physical distancing. This procedure provides guidance on how family visits are to be scheduled and implemented at Pinecrest Nursing Home

The role that families, friends and visitors play in providing caregiving and emotional supports is important to the quality of life for LTC residents. To support LTC residents, the Ministry of Long-Term Care is proposing a gradual, staged resumption of visits guided by the following principles:

Safety: Any approach to visiting in a LTC home must consider, balance, and meet the health and safety needs of residents, staff, and visitors to ensure risks are mitigated.

Emotional Well-being: Allowing visitors is intended to support the emotional well-being of residents and their families/friends, through reducing any potential negative impacts related to social isolation. Homes must make every effort to maintain the visiting schedule and any cancellations should be due to extraordinary circumstances such as inclement weather during planned outdoor visits.

Equitable Access: All individuals seeking to visit a resident must be given equitable visitation access, consistent with resident preference and within reasonable restrictions that safeguard residents.

Flexibility: The physical/infrastructure characteristics of the LTC home, and its current status with respect to availability of Personal Protective Equipment, staffing availability, and any other key factors must be considered.

Visitors should consider their personal health and susceptibility to the virus in determining whether visiting a long-term care home is appropriate. Where it is not possible or advisable for in-person visits, the home will continue to provide virtual visiting options.

Preparation

Effective February 21, 2022 indoor general visits are permitted.

As the pandemic situation evolves in Ontario, direction regarding visits to a LTC home will be adjusted as necessary keeping the safety and emotional well-being of residents and staff at the forefront.

The following baseline requirements must be met before the home can accept any visitors:

1. The LTC home is NOT in outbreak.

a) In the event that the home enters into an outbreak, visits will not take place. Compliance with all Directives issued by the Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH) and the local Public Health Unit (PHU) must be maintained.

b) The home will consult with the local PHU regarding temporary cessation of visits if there is an increase in community cases of COVID.

c) Outdoor visits with general visitors have restarted. Visits may be canceled due to inclement weather, lack of staffing and other extenuating circumstances.

d) General visitors cannot visit a resident that is symptomatic or in isolation

2. The home has established:

- a. A process for communicating with visitors/caregivers about the resumption of visits and the associated procedures, including but not limited to, infection prevention and control (IPAC), scheduling and any home-specific policies. This process will include sharing an information package with visitors on IPAC, the use of surgical/procedural masks and other operational procedures such as limiting movement around the home, if applicable, and ensuring visitors' agreement to comply. Home materials will include an approach to dealing with non-adherence to home policies and procedures, including the potential for discontinuation of visits.
- b. Protocols in place to maintain the highest of IPAC standards prior to, during and after visits.
- c. For outdoor visits: An area for screening outside; an outdoor visiting area that does not require the visitor to travel through the home; outdoor visiting area to be marked clearly with location for resident to sit that is 6 feet away from the marked visitor space; outdoor chair to be provided for both resident and visitor. Visitors under the age of 1 do not count towards the maximum number of general visitors, and do not require a mask. Outdoor visits will not take place during the winter months.

3. The visitor must:

- a. Pass active screening every time they are on the premises of or enter the home. Visitors will be actively screened on entry for symptoms and exposures for COVID-19 and not admitted if they do not pass the screening. Verbal attestation to not experiencing any of the typical and atypical symptoms.

Visitors:

- Verbally attest they have not been told by a doctor, healthcare provider, or health unit that they should be isolating
 - Verbally attest that no one they live with is experiencing COVID 19 symptoms, or awaiting test results after experiencing COVID19 symptoms
 - Verbally attest to home staff that in the last 10 days they have not visited: another resident who is self-isolating or symptomatic, and/or a home in outbreak.
 - Verbally attest they have not been identified as a "close contact" of someone that has COVID-19, COVID-19 symptoms, or a COVID exposure alert
 - Verbally attest they have read the visiting policy in the last month.
 - All visitors do require a rapid antigen test.
- b. Comply with LTC home IPAC protocols, including proper use of masks, physical distancing, respiratory etiquette, and hand hygiene. The visitor must wear the surgical/procedural mask that covers mouth, nose and chin at all times while in the home. Must complete IPAC training prior to visiting.

The home is responsible for supplying surgical/procedural masks to indoor visitors

Outdoor visitors will be required to wear a mask that covers mouth, nose and chin. If they do not have a mask with them, the home will provide a mask. The mask must be worn at all times during the outdoor visit.

- c. Use the provided alcohol-based hand rub (ABHR) when arriving at the screening desk, throughout the visit as needed and upon leaving the home's property after the visit.

- d. Respect that outdoor visits may be canceled due to inclement weather. All visits may be canceled in the event the resident is not feeling well or isolating, the home is unable to staff the visit, the home is in outbreak, or the home's supply of PPE is low.
- e. Any non-adherence to these rules will be the basis for discontinuation of visits at the discretion of the home's Registered staff or designate. Decisions regarding length of time, and requirements to be met will be established by the DOC or Administrator ("Visiting_Non-Adherence" policy).

4. Beginning December 15, 2021 all indoor general visitors must be fully-vaccinated or have a valid medical exemption and provide proof to the home (see Pinecrest Nursing Home's "COVID-19 Immunization policy"). All general visitors, including children under the age of 5, may resume visits. Children under the age of 5 are exempt from Pinecrest Nursing Home's COVID-19 Immunization policy. Children under the age of 1 are not considered visitors, and therefore do not require a Rapid Antigen testing or to be vaccinated.

Definitions

Staff –those employed by long-term care homes

On-site contractors – those who provide scheduled contracted services to the home. Examples may include hair-dressing, foot care etc.

Physical Distancing- A required practice of maintaining a designated distance from another to prevent the possible transmission of droplet transmission. Public Health recommends individuals maintain a physical distance of 6 feet or 2 meters from others.

Essential visitors

There are four types of essential visitors:

People visiting very ill or palliative residents who are receiving end of life care.

Government inspectors with statutory right of entry (i.e. Ministry of Long-Term Care inspectors, Ministry of Labour inspectors, etc.)

Support workers: persons who visit a home to provide support to the critical operations of the home or essential services. For example, assessment/diagnostic services, assistive device vendors (oxygen therapy), post mortem, emergency services, are examples of support workers.

Caregivers is a type of visitor that provide direct care to meet the essential needs of a particular resident (activities of daily living, cognitive stimulation, meaningful connection and emotional support, etc.).

Caregivers must be designated by the resident or their substitute decision maker.

General visitors – any family member, close friend or neighbor coming to the home to see a resident who do not fall into another category. General visitors are encouraged to practice physical distancing for their visit. General visitors younger than 14 years of age must be accompanied by an adult and must follow all applicable public health measures (active screening, physical distancing, hand hygiene, and masking). All children under the age of 1 are not counted as a visitor. Examples include residents family friend, previous neighbour, entertainment, etc.

Fully- vaccinated:

- The full series of a COVID-19 vaccine authorized by Health Canada , or any combination of such vaccines,
- One or two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine not authorized by Health Canada, followed by one dose of a COVID-19 mRNA vaccine authorized by Health Canada, or
- Three doses of a COVID-19 vaccine not authorized by Health Canada; and
- They received their final dose of the COVID-19 vaccine at least 14 days ago.

Procedure – Outdoor Visits

The Screener or designate will monitor and oversee the family visits during the pandemic process.

Families/friends of residents will be able to schedule a minimum of two visits per week by emailing their requests to outdoorvisits@pinecrestnh.ca at anytime, or calling Pinecrest Monday-Friday, 9 am- 5pm.

There will be a minimum of two visits per resident per week permitted. Families/friends are encouraged to establish amongst themselves who will be visiting the resident weekly. Maximum of 10 visitors per resident at a time, outdoors, will be allowed (this number is including caregivers). General Visitors under the age of 14 must be accompanied by an adult and must follow all applicable public health measures (physical distancing, active screening, hand hygiene, and universal masking). Physical distancing should be maintained, however brief hugs are permitted.

Outdoor visitors will remain outside the home and be directed to the outdoor visiting area by a staff member. Visitors will conclude the visit at the set time and exit the home's property directly thereafter.

Visiting times will be scheduled every 20-minutes. The visiting program for outdoor visits will operate 4 days a week, Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday, and Sunday, from 10 am and ending at 5 pm (meal times excluded).

All visits will be monitored by the Screener or designate from a distance to support safety measures, and the resident during the visit while allowing them to communicate in confidence. The staff member will wear a surgical/procedural mask at all times.

PSW staff will assist the resident to outside at their designated visiting time. The screener will escort the resident to and from the visiting area once screening is completed.

The visiting area will be cleaned and disinfected between every visit by staff.

Families/friends will be asked to arrive 15-20 minutes before their scheduled visit so that they are screened and swabbed prior to their visit.

Steps for Visitors:

- Go to the screening table near the entrance of Pinecrest Nursing Home
- Clean hands using ABHR
- Don mask
- Answer screening questions
- Have Rapid Test completed
- Wait for staff member to invite you to the outdoor visiting area
- A mask will be provided for the visit if you do not have your own mask. Wear mask covering mouth, nose and chin at all times. Indoor visitors must wear a surgical / procedural mask.
- Do not bring pets. Any outside beverages, food, or gifts can be given to the individual overseeing and screening visits. Food must be in an air tight, sealed, wipeable container.

- Please ensure that you are following physical distancing guidelines and remaining within designated area. Failure to do so may result in your loved one being in isolation for 10 days and a COVID-19 test completed. Future visits may be discontinued.
- After blowing nose, touching eyes, mouth, coughing or sneezing and at the conclusion of the visit, clean hands with ABHR
- Exit the home's property at the conclusion of the visit.

Enhanced Cleaning Requirements for Outdoor Visiting Area

Staff members will be provided with high level disinfectant wipes to clean surfaces and objects between each visit. Gloves to be worn.

Cleaning will be completed by the staff coordinating and supervising the outdoor visits.

Chair arms, seats, table tops/legs will be cleaned with a high level disinfectant wipe (contact time 1 minute) upon conclusion of the visit –both resident and visitor areas.

Cleaning should be documented on the appropriate cleaning checklist.

Documentation

Enhanced Outdoor Visiting Cleaning Checklist

Name of Outdoor Area:			Date:		
Time					
Chair 1 Seat, Arms, Legs					
Chair 2 – Seat, Arms, Legs					
Chair 3 – Seat, Arms, Legs					
Table Tops, legs					
Initial					

Procedure – Indoor Visits

Effective February 21, 2022 general visits are resuming.

As of December 15, general visitors visiting indoors must be fully vaccinated. Effective March 14, indoor visits have a maximum 4 at a time (including caregivers) per resident.

The screener or designate will monitor and oversee the family visits during the pandemic process. Indoor visits will operate 4 days a week, Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Sunday, 10am- 330pm (being the last swab time), meal times excluded. Exceptions to visit days and times may be made to accommodate special arrangements, but must be made in advance and based on multiple factors (staffing for testing, space availability, etc). Indoor visitors should arrive 20 minutes prior to their scheduled visit to have their Rapid Antigen Test completed. Indoor visitors must have a Rapid Antigen Test completed prior to being permitted entry for their visit. Visits will be booked for 60 minute allotments.

For Visitors

4 indoor visitors per resident at a time, 10 outdoor visitors at a time, including caregivers

A maximum of 3 general visits total will be permitted in the home at any given time. General visits will be by appointment. A daily schedule of visitors will be provided to the screener and to the Nursing Station.

Location of visit will be a designated area. Visitors must remain physically distanced from other residents and staff, brief hugs for the resident they are visiting is permitted. Visitors must only visit their resident.

Families/friends of residents will be able to schedule a visit by emailing their requests to

outdoorvisits@pinecrestnh.ca at any time. Families/friends without email access may schedule visits by phone to activation or designated screener at Pinecrest Nursing Home, Monday-Friday, 9-5. There will be a minimum of two visits per resident per week permitted. Families/friends are encouraged to establish amongst themselves who will be visiting the resident weekly.

Visitors will present at the entrance of Pinecrest Nursing Home for active screening. Full name, phone number and resident name to be visited must be provided to the screener. Only visitors on the schedule will be permitted to enter (unless able to accommodate). Visitors must participate in surveillance testing as part of screening. They must have a negative rapid antigen test prior to entering and proceeding with their visit. Indoor visitors must provide QR code as proof of full Immunization against COVID-19 (or valid medical exemption), as well as photo ID.

Visitors are not permitted to bring pets. Outside food and gifts may be brought to the resident and is brought in an air tight, wipeable container.

Visitors will conclude the visit at the set time (60 minutes allotments) and exit the home’s property directly thereafter through the front door.

All visits will be overseen by Screener or designate. The staff member will wear a surgical/procedural mask at all times.

The staff member will have a daily visit log sheet to note the scheduled visitors for the day and the start time of the visit.

Staff will clean the area using a disinfectant cleaner following an indoor visit and document on the cleaning checklist.

**Documentation
Enhanced Indoor Visiting Cleaning Checklist**

Name of Indoor Area:			Date:		
Time					
Chair 1 Seat, Arms, Legs					
Chair 2 – Seat, Arms, Legs					
Chair 3 – Seat, Arms, Legs					
Table 1 Tops, legs					
Table 2 Tops, legs					
Initial					

Note: No general visitors are permitted if the resident is symptomatic or isolating under droplet and contact precautions, or the home is in outbreak.

Palliative Visits

As a resident is actively receiving end of life support, they can receive visitors. Residents in a shared accommodation will be moved to a private room (blue room or an isolation room) whenever possible. Individuals visiting a palliative resident can come at any time. They must be screened in, and they will be asked if they are willing to have a Rapid Antigen Test done (note: they do not have to await results). They do not have to have a test completed to enter and visit the palliative resident. A maximum of two visitors will be permitted at a time. If more than that arrive, they must work out among themselves which two will visit at a time. If the visitor fails screening, or is from out of province, they will have to wear full PPE for the duration of their visit.

Pets will be permitted to visit a palliative resident. The individual handling the pet must follow all the above requirements of a palliative visitor (be actively screened, wear PPE if they fail screenings, etc.) The individual handling the pet must take them immediately to the palliative residents room and not visit any other residents or staff.

Positive COVID-19 Test

If a visitor tests positive for COVID-19, they must follow Public Health's advisory. They may not return for visiting until cleared by Public Health.

For Essential Caregivers

An essential caregiver will be an individual who is not staff, nor on-site contractors, that provide direct care services to the resident ie. feeding, bathing, exercise, emotional support, cognitive stimulation, etc. Essential caregivers must be designated by the resident and/or their substitute decision maker. Essential caregivers will be tracked on a separate sign-in sheet. For more information on the Essential Caregiver role, please read "Visits_Caregiver_Program" policy.

Additional Required Reading:

The following policies must be read monthly in conjunction with this visiting policy: visits non-adherence, COVID Physical Distancing, and Public Health's "Recommended Steps: Putting on Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Also, must watch Public Health's videos: Putting on One-Piece Facial Protection , Taking off One-Piece Facial Protection, How to Hand Wash.

References:

Ontario. COVID-19: visiting long-term care homes.

Ontario Health. Updating the Visitor Policy to Long-Term Care Homes, July 2020.

Ministry of Long-Term Care. Directive #3 and MLTC COVID-19 Guidance Document for LTCHs July 16, 2021.

Ministry of Long-Term Care. Directive #3, COVID-19 Guidance Document for LTCHs, and Rapid Testing Merged FAQs . February, 2022.

Ministry of Long-Term Care. COVID-19 Guidance document for long-term care homes in Ontario. June, 2022.

Ministry of Long-Term Care."Resuming Visits in Long-Term Care Homes, September 2020.

Ministry of Long-Term Care. "Minister's Directive: COVID-19: Long-Term Care Home Surveillance Testing and Access to Homes". December, 2021

Ministry of Long-Term Care. "COVID-19 Visiting Policy", November, 2020.

Ministry of Long-Term Care. " Frequently Asked Questions COVID-19 Policy", November 2020.

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