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Policy: Visiting during a Pandemic

Purpose: To ensure a safe environment that follows provincially mandated protocols. This procedure provides guidance on how family visits are 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

As the COVID-19 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, General visits will not take place. Compliance with all guidance documents from the Ministry and the local Public Health Unit (PHU) must be maintained.
 - b. 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 visits and the associated procedures, including but not limited to, infection prevention and control (IPAC) 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. 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: Outdoor visits will not take place during the winter months.

3. The visitor must:

- a. Passively screen every time they are on the premises of or enter the home. Visitors should self-monitor for any symptoms of COVID-19 and exclude themselves from the home or visits if experiencing symptoms. Visitors must sign in in the sign in book with full contact information including date, name, phone number, and purpose of visit (i.e. who they are visiting).

Visitors should self monitor for:

- Fever (Temperature of 37.8 C/ 100 F or greater) and/or chills
- Cough (new or worsening)
- Shortness of breath
- Decrease or loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Runny nose or nasal congestion
- Headache
- Nausea, vomiting Diarrhea
- Fatigue or muscle pain

or:

- Been told you should be quarantining, isolation or staying home and not attending a High Risk Setting (Long-term care home)
- Have tested positive for COVID in the last 10 days
- been a close contact of someone with COVID-19 or these symptoms

If any of the above apply, to not enter the home and postpone their visit.

- b. Comply with LTC home IPAC protocols, including proper use of masks, respiratory etiquette, and hand hygiene. Must complete IPAC training prior to visiting.

The home is responsible for supplying surgical/procedural masks to indoor visitors (if required)

- c. Use the provided alcohol-based hand rub (ABHR) when arriving at the sign in desk, throughout the visit as needed and upon leaving the home's property after the visit.
- d. 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 Director of Care or Administrator ("Visiting_Non-Adherence" policy).

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 (passive 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.

Procedure – Outdoor Visits

Outdoor visits resume as weather allows.

General Visitors under the age of 14 must be accompanied by an adult and must follow all applicable public health measures (passive screening and hand hygiene).

Visiting times out of respect of residents care needs will be from 10 am and ending at 7 pm.

Steps for Visitors:

- Sign in the visitor book in the entrance (vestibule) of Pinecrest Nursing Home
- Clean hands using ABHR
- Passively screen for symptoms

Procedure – Indoor Visits

Effective April 1, 2023, visitors are no longer required to be vaccinated.

Visits is 7 days a week. Out of respect for the needs of other residents, we ask that visitors respect visiting times of between 10 am-7pm.

For Visitors

Visitors will present at the entrance of Pinecrest Nursing Home to sign in the visitor book. Full name, phone number and resident name to be visited must be provided.

Visitors are not permitted to bring pets, unless completed the pet visitation requirements. For more

information speak with Activation staff. Outside food and gifts may be brought to the resident and is brought in an air tight, wipeable container.

Note: No general visitors are permitted if the resident is symptomatic or isolating under 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) whenever possible. Individuals visiting a palliative resident can come at any time. If the palliative visitor fails screening, they must still be permitted entry, but 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 (wear PPE if they fail screenings). 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 should not return for visiting for 10 days from symptom onset/positive test.

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. For more information on the Essential Caregiver role, please read "Visits_Caregiver_Program" policy.

Additional Required Reading:

The following policies must be read annually or as changes occur, in conjunction with this visiting policy: visits non-adherence 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:

Ministry of Long-Term Care. COVID-19 Guidance document for long-term care homes in Ontario. June, 2023.

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