

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS:

Visitor Policy for Licensed Supportive Living and Long-Term Care (CMOH Order 14-2020)

My loved one is a continuing care or licensed supportive living resident. Am I allowed to visit?

- At this time, we are permitting designated essential visitors, though still only in these limited circumstances:
 - Where the resident's quality of life and/or care needs cannot be met without their assistance and where staff are unable to meet the need.
 - When a resident is dying.

What is a "quality of life" need?

- A quality of life need describes immediate and essential needs that are beyond care needs, such as helping someone eat or get dressed. Residents may, in these settings, have cognitive impairments or other conditions and disabilities that create other kind of needs.
- Though quality of life seems very broad, it is intended to acknowledge the psychological, emotional and social needs that may exist, and perhaps be difficult or impossible for staff to meet, but are critical for the health and well-being of residents.

How do I know if my loved ones' essential needs are not able to be met by staff?

- Unmet needs that are not able to be addressed by staff may be identified by staff, the resident, or family members.
- Concerned residents and designated essential visitors should work with the site contact to understand the current situation, how staff are meeting needs and possibly where resident unmet needs may exist.
- There will also be some consideration of the role of designated essential visitors in assisting directly, as not every unmet need may be able to be met by the designated essential visitor.

Are all designated essential visitors permitted entry to the facilities where their loved one lives?

- Designated essential visitors are only permitted entry if a resident is at the end of their life, or to provide essential care and support **if staff are unable to do so**.
- Designated essential visitors must talk with the operator about the resident's unmet needs, and their ability to assist, to determine if you are permitted entry.
- **All visits** by a designated essential visitor must be pre-arranged with the operator.

I am a designated essential visitor and am permitted to be on site regularly to deliver direct care to my loved one. Am I able to have someone fill in temporarily for me if I need a break?

- Yes. A resident may identify a temporary replacement designated essential visitor for approval if the designated essential visitor is unable to perform their role for a period of time (e.g. self-isolation, other caregiving duties, or otherwise unable).
- This is to enable a replacement, when required, not for the designate to change regularly or multiple times.

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My loved one is a continuing care or licenced supportive living resident and is dying/palliative. Am I allowed to visit?

- Individuals who are dying should have the opportunity to have their loved ones at their side while following the public health guidelines.
- Visitors are limited to one at a time, with two exceptions:
 - When a child needs to be accompanied
 - If the room is of a sufficient size to accommodate physical distancing of two metres between people, two visitors may attend at the same time.

When would a resident be considered at end of life to allow for end-of-life visits?

- While it is difficult to be precise around when an individual is at end of life, in the context of COVID-19, visits at end of life refers to the last two weeks of life.
- A suggested consideration to help make this determination would be to ask yourself, *would I be surprised if this resident were alive two weeks from now?*

My loved one is a continuing care or licenced supportive living resident but isn't dying/palliative. Am I allowed to visit now if we stay outdoors?

- Now that the weather is improving, outdoor visits are also acceptable and encouraged, following all physical distancing requirements.
- All visitors must use a mask or face covering and remain outdoors at all times.
- Groups must not exceed three, including the resident and the designated essential visitor, and all outdoor visits must be arranged with the operator.
- **Note:** if the appropriate outdoor space is only accessible through the facility, only the designated essential visitor is permitted entry for the visit.

As a visitor, what do I need to do to keep continuing care or licenced supportive living residents safe from COVID-19?

- When visiting a continuing care resident, visitors must:
 - Undergo a health screening
 - Wear requested PPE
 - Adhere to physical distancing
 - Practice hand washing and good hygiene
 - Stay in designated areas
 - Follow all facility directions.
- **Do not visit if you are sick.**

Am I allowed to bring gifts when I visit a continuing care or licenced supportive living resident?

- Current evidence suggests the virus generally survives for only a few hours on a surface or object, but it may be possible for it to survive several days under ideal conditions.
- To be safe, please refrain from bringing unessential gifts and follow any additional operator protocol, which may include disinfecting the item at drop off.

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Are operators able to make further restrictions above the provincial visitor policy?

- Not without consulting the appropriate partner (e.g. AHS Continuing Care Zone Executive Director, Alberta Health Accommodation Licensing Inspector, Seniors and Housing, Community and Social Services).
- **Note:** Resident and site circumstance (e.g., outbreak status, requirements for physical distancing requirements and other protective measures ordered) may mean that not all desired visits are able to be accommodated.
- This said, operators must not unreasonably deny permitted designated essential visitors or outdoor visits.

Why are there such variances in the approach that operators are taking with visitors?

- If several designated essential visitors meet this criteria in any one facility, it is acceptable for an operator to create a reasonable approach that responds to requests in a way that ensures both resident care needs and safe visitor presence (including consideration of operational feasibility and the availability of staff to facilitate the visits, as per requirements).
- Operators must be transparent about their approach with residents and designated essential visitors.
- This may include staggering visits, phasing visitors in on a unit-by-unit basis, or other creative approaches that ensure residents are receiving the essential quality of life and/or care they require in response to unmet needs.

Some facilities schedule drive-by parades and visits through the window. Are these still permitted?

- Yes.
- In addition to the role of designated essential visitors and the opportunity for outdoor visits, operators, staff, residents and families should continue to work together to find innovative, accessible and feasible solutions to tackle any negative consequences, such as social isolation and loneliness.
- This may include scheduled virtual visits, visits through the window and 'drive-by parades' as part of social/leisure activity programming, while following all guidelines and requirements for enhanced cleaning protocols and group activities.

What Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) requirements are there for visitors during visits?

- Outdoor visitors must supply and will be permitted to use any type of mask (e.g. non-medical).
- Indoor visitors will be provided with a surgical/procedure mask and any other required PPE.

Do continuing care and licensed supportive living facilities have enough PPE to support visits?

- We continue to work with all facilities serving vulnerable populations to make sure they have adequate PPE to support the continued safety of staff, residents and visitors.

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Why did the Alberta government decide to make these amendments?

- Quality of life needs to be supported alongside quality of care and safety.
- We know residents rely on social connections with friends and family, which is why we're working to support these connections while maintaining safety.
- It is also important that residents who are nearing the end of their life receive the comfort of loved ones.

Given the outbreaks and the number of deaths related to COVID-19 in continuing care facilities, are these amendments to visiting restrictions a good idea?

- Maintaining social connections are an important quality of life factor.
- However, in-person visits should only take place when proper safety measures are followed.
- Otherwise, continuing care residents and loved ones are encouraged to connect remotely.

For more information, please refer to [CMOH Order 14-2020 and guidelines](#).