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**COVID-19 Visitor Policy for Chester Village (the Home)**

**1.0 Introduction**

This policy is intended to supplement The Ministry’s COVID-19 Guidance Document for LTCH and the CMOH Directive #3 for as long as they are in place. To the extent that anything in this policy conflicts with the Ministry Guidance or Directive #3, those documents will prevail, and as the Homes are bound by them. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve, 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 Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021 and O. Reg 246/22.

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 status of the home with respect to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) are all variables to take into account when setting home-specific policies.
5. ***Equality***: Residents have the right to choose their visitors. In addition, residents or their substitute decision-makers, as applicable, have the authority to designate caregivers.

**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 all applicable legislation and align with the guidance in this policy.

The Home is also responsible for maintaining a Visitor Log that is available for at least 30 days and be readily available to the local public health unit (PHU) for contact tracing purposes upon request. The visitor log must include, at a minimum: i) the name and contact number of the visitor, ii) time and date of visit and iii) the purpose of the visit (for example, name of resident visited).

Furthermore, the Home is responsible to ensure that all visitors have access to this policy and that this policy is communicated to the Residents and Families through their respective councils, family email communications, 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 student placements are not considered visitors as their access to the home is determined by Chester Village. Infants under the age of one are also not considered visitors and are excluded from testing requirements.

***4.2 Essential Visitors*** There are no limits on the total number of essential visitors allowed to come into a home at any given time during regular visiting hours as determined by the Home. However, the Home does reserve the right to limit the number of essential visitors under certain circumstances where it is impossible to follow public health safety measures, such as physical distancing.

Essential visitors are the only type of visitors allowed when there is an outbreak in a home or area of a home or when a resident has failed screening, is symptomatic or in isolation.

As per O. Reg. 246/22 under the Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021, **there are** **four types of essential visitors**:

1. A caregiver, as defined under section 4 of O. Reg. 246/22 (see definition below)

2. A support worker who visits a home to provide support to the critical operations of the home or to provide essential services to residents

3. A person visiting a very ill resident for compassionate reasons including, but not limited to, hospice services or end-of-life care

4. A government inspector with a statutory right to enter a long-term care home to carry out their duties

For further clarity:

* ***A Caregiver*** means an individual who,

(a) is a family member or friend of a resident or a person of importance to a resident,

(b) is able to comply with all applicable laws including any applicable directives, orders, guidance, advice or recommendations issued by the Chief Medical Officer of Health or a medical officer of health appointed under the Health Protection and Promotion Act,

(c) provides one or more forms of support or assistance to meet the needs of the resident, including providing direct physical support such as activities of daily living or providing social, spiritual or emotional support, whether on a paid or unpaid basis,

(d) is designated by the resident or the resident’s substitute decision-maker with authority to give that designation, if any, and

(e) in the case of an individual under 16 years of age, has approval from a parent or legal guardian to be designated as a caregiver.

Chester Village does not require scheduling or will restrict the length or frequency of visits by caregivers. However, in the case where a resident resides in an area of the home in outbreak, is symptomatic or isolating under additional precautions, only one caregiver may visit at a time.

A caregiver should not visit any other home for 10 days after visiting:

• an individual with a confirmed case of COVID-19

• an individual experiencing COVID-19 symptoms

Recognizing there are caregivers who want to volunteer to support more than one resident, in the event of an outbreak, caregivers may support up to two residents who are COVID-19 positive, provided the home obtains consent from all involved residents (or their substitute decision makers). Caregivers may also support more than one resident in non-outbreak situations, with the same expectation regarding resident consent.

* 1. ***General Visitors***

A general visitor is a person who is not an essential visitor and is visiting to provide non-essential services related to either the operations of the home or a particular resident or group of residents. General visitors include those persons visiting for social reasons as well as visitors providing non-essential services such as personal care services, entertainment, or individuals touring the home.

Chester Village will endeavour to prioritize the mental and emotional well-being of residents and strive to be as accommodating as possible when scheduling visits with general visitors.

**5.0 Access to the Home**

All types of visitors, including children under the age of five, can enter the long-term care home once they pass the screening requirements outlined in Section 6.0 of this policy.

All types of visitors, with the exception of the children under the age of five, will need to follow the vaccination policy of the individual long-term care home. Chester Village has a mandatory vaccination policy that requires anyone entering the Home to be up to date with their vaccinations. For clarity, up to date with vaccinations means you have received the full series of a COVID-19 vaccine and any booster doses when eligible.

Up to four visitors (including caregivers) per resident may visit at a time for indoor visits. While there is no set limit on the number of visitors for outdoor visits, the Home requests than any groups over 4 notify the Home at least 24 – 48 hours in advance of the visit so that it can be determined if there is an appropriate space to accommodate the group. Without advance notice and permission granted, groups larger than 4 may be denied visiting outdoors.

Individuals who are not vaccinated against COVID-19 will be accommodated for outdoor visits only as long as they adhere to public health safety measures during the visit (ie. maintaining a distance of 2 meters or 6 feet from other groups).

**Restrictions during outbreaks or when a resident is isolating**

Essential visitors are the only type of visitors allowed when a resident is isolating or resides in a home or area of the home in an outbreak.

General visitors are not permitted:

• when a home or area of a home is in outbreak

• to visit an isolating resident

• when the local public health unit so directs

In the case where a local public health unit directs a home in respect of the number of visitors allowed, the home must follow the direction of the local public health unit.

**6.0 Screening Requirements**

All types of visitors will be subject to the screening requirements as set out by the Home and amended from time to time as per Ministry guidance. Chester Village uses a screening tool called EPASS which will direct the visitor through the screening questions. Visitors must display a green pass on their electronic device to demonstrate they have answered the questions and passed the screening requirements. If you fail, you will not be permitted to enter the Home. Alternatively, the screener can ask the questions of the visitor and document the responses in EPASS.

Prior to visiting any resident, the Home will require a rapid antigen test (RAT) be completed on site. The visitor may proceed into the Home only after the RAT has processed for the full 15 minute time period and the result is negative.

**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.

***7.1 PPE***  At a minimum, appropriate PPE for a visitor is a medical mask that is worn for the entire duration of the visit and must never be removed in the company of a resident. The Home will provide the visitor with the medical mask as it is a certified Level 1, 2 or 3 grade.

***Important note:*** Essential visitors who are support workers and who are provided with appropriate PPE from their employer may enter the Home. Any visitor who has their own N95 or KN95 may continue to wear it for the visit as it is considered superior to the medical mask.

All visitors will follow the PPE requirements posted on the resident’s door if they are in isolation or on precautions for any reason. This may include wearing protective eyewear, gown, gloves and/or N95 masks. The Home will provide the appropriate PPE for each circumstance.

***7.2 Education*** The Home must provide education or training to all visitors about physical distancing, respiratory etiquette, hand hygiene, IPAC practices and proper use of PPE.

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

[recommended steps: putting on personal protective equipment](https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/ipac/ppe-recommended-steps)

• Video entitled *Putting on Full Personal Protective Equipment.*

[putting on full personal protective equipment](https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/videos/ipac-fullppe-on)

• Video entitled *Taking off Full Personal Protective Equipment*.

[taking off full personal protective equipment](https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/videos/ipac-fullppe-off)

• Video entitled *How to Hand Wash* and *How to Hand Rub*.

[how to hand wash](https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/videos/ipac-handwash) and [how to hand rub](https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/videos/ipac-handrub)

**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 guidance referenced 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:**

**Directive #3** **for Long-Term Care Homes under the Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021**

[CMOH Directive #3 for Long-Term Care Homes.](https://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/directives/LTCH_HPPA.pdf)

**COVID-19 Guidance Document for Long-Term Care Homes and Retirement Homes for Public Health Units**

[COVID-19 Guidance: Long-Term Care Homes and Retirement Homes for Public Health Units.](https://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/2019_LTC_homes_retirement_homes_for_PHUs_guidance.pdf)

**Staying Up to Date with COVID-19 Vaccines: Recommended Doses**

[Staying Up to Date with COVID-19 Vaccines: Recommended Doses.](https://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/vaccine/COVID_19_vaccine_up_to_date.pdf)

**Ontario Regulation 246/22 Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021**

<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/r22246#BK330>