

POLICY: Essential Caregiver Visits (Long-Term Care)

Organizing Essential Caregiver visitors balances mitigating risks to residents, staff, and visitors with the mental, physical and spiritual needs of residents for their quality of life. Connecting with friends and family is essential to the resident's emotional health and well-being. The steps outlined follow the current directives from the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Long-Term Care and Public Health Ontario Guidelines, and all other applicable guidelines.

As the pandemic situation evolves in Ontario, visits at the Pines will be adjusted as necessary, keeping the safety and emotional well-being of residents and staff at the forefront.

Palliative and Emergency Situations:

- Despite the requirements set out in this policy, the requirements for Support Workers, Essential Caregivers, and General Visitors **do not** need to be followed in an emergency or palliative/end-of-life situation. These visits are still subject to IPAC, restrictions, and requirements contained in the Minister's Directive #3 as issued by the Chief Medical Officer of Health.

Designating Essential Caregivers:

A type of essential visitor who is designated by the resident and/or their substitute decision-maker and is visiting to provide care to the resident (eg: supporting feeding, mobility, personal hygiene, cognitive stimulation, communication, meaningful connection, relational continuity, and assistance in decision-making).

Examples of essential caregivers include family members who provide a meaningful connection, a privately hired caregiver, a paid companion, or translators.

Requirements for Essential Caregivers:

- ✓ Must be at least 18 years of age;
- ✓ No maximum number of essential caregivers per resident at this time;
- ✓ A resident and/or their substitute decision-maker may change a designation in response to a change in:
 - The resident's care needs which are reflected in the plan of care;
 - The availability of a designated essential caregiver, either temporary (eg: illness) or permanent;
- **The request for an essential caregiver form must be signed by the resident or substitute decision-maker only.**



Visitation frequency and duration:

- A maximum of **2 Essential Caregivers** may be present during indoor visits;

Planning a visit:

- Do not visit any other resident or home for 14 days after visiting another resident who is self-isolating or symptomatic, and/or another home in an outbreak.
- The Pines will not be scheduling visits for the Essential Caregivers;
- Food items brought for residents to be non-perishable;
- Essential Caregivers are not allowed to bring their own food for consumption, except where medically necessary. If this is the case, the conference room on the second floor by the physiotherapy room is the designated location where you may remove your mask to eat;
- Where both the resident and the essential caregiver are fully immunized, visitors may accompany a resident for meals including for the purposes of either having a meal themselves or to assist a resident with feeding;

Entering the Home:

- Arrive at the Home between the hours of **9am to 4:30pm, if you require a rapid antigen test.** This is to alleviate congestion around staff shift change periods.
- **When entering the main door vestibule, thoroughly clean your hands with the available hand sanitizer, then place on a supplied surgical mask. Make sure the mask completely covers your nose and mouth before moving from the vestibule into the lobby.** This mask must be worn at all times when visiting; face shields will also be made available to those who wish to wear one;
- Present to the dedicated visitor screening desk to the right of the main entrance.

Screening and Confirming Vaccination Status:

- Complete screening at the front entrance. This screening includes answering questions and having temperature checked and recorded upon entering the home;
- One-time confirmation of full vaccination – If 14 days have passed since receiving a second dose of a vaccine, present confirmation of receiving both vaccination doses;
- A badge will be provided to identify an Essential Caregiver who has been fully vaccinated. This badge must be worn and visible at all times while in the home.
- Essential Caregivers are subject to antigen testing based on their vaccination status in accordance with the Minister's Directive: *COVID-19 Surveillance Testing and Access to Homes*;
 - Fully immunized essential caregivers will not be required to complete rapid antigen testing upon entry to the home, but must show proof that they are fully vaccinated.
 - Partial immunized or unimmunized essential caregivers will be required to participate in rapid antigen testing based on the provincial guidelines;

- The visit will be canceled if the screening criteria are not met or there is non-compliance with any of the requirements of this policy;

While in the Home, depending on vaccination status:

- Comply with the home's Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) protocols, including donning and doffing of personal protective equipment;
- Only to visit the resident 'they are approved to meet, and no other resident';
- Partial or unimmunized essential caregivers- Do not roam around resident home areas, and halls;
- Partial or unimmunized essential caregivers - If required step out into the hallway beside the resident's room when staff are assisting with the care needs of the resident, and remain in the immediate area;
- Use the identified washrooms;
- Essential Caregivers may use the identified area upstairs beside the Physiotherapy room if they need to take a break to have something to eat and drink;
- Where both the resident and the essential caregiver are fully immunized, visitors may accompany a resident for meals including for the purposes of either having a meal themselves or to assist a resident with feeding;

Additional access for fully immunized Essential Caregivers:

- Essential Caregivers may join in communal dining and indoor activities.
- Where both the resident and the essential caregiver are fully immunized, visitors may accompany a resident for meals including for the purposes of either having a meal themselves or to assist a resident with feeding;

Going Outdoors with a Resident via the Front Lobby:

- Advise a staff member that you will be taking a resident outdoors;
- Proceed to the main lobby and present to the visitor screening desk;
- Once the lobby is clear, proceed outdoors;
- Observe all the same infection control procedures as if still indoors at The Pines;
- Remain on the Pine Street campus;
- Non-essential care giver visitors should not access the Pines campus;
- Return through the main entrance when the lobby is clear and check back in at the visitor screening desk.

Leaving the Home:

- At the end of your visit, ensure you have all your personal items;
- Proceed directly to the main lobby, no exit screening is required;
- Exit through the designated exit door in the main stairwell. In the case of mobility concerns,

proceed to the visitor screening desk where a staff member will assist with facilitating exiting through the main entrance;

- Once you enter the vestibule, thoroughly clean your hands with the available hand sanitizer, then remove your surgical mask and dispose of it in the garbage can before leaving through the front door.

Ending a Visit

- The Pines has the discretion to end a visit by any essential caregiver/visitor who repeatedly fails to adhere to the rules, policies, and procedures, provided:
- The Pines has explained the applicable requirements to the essential caregiver/visitor;
- The visitor has the resources to adhere to the requirements; and,
- The essential caregiver/visitor has been given sufficient time to adhere to the requirements;
- The home will document all non-compliance, as well as any/all follow-up actions associated with the non-compliance and re-entry.

Responding to Non-Adherence by Visitors:

- Failure to follow this policy, the home will provide additional clarity to support essential caregivers and rationale for adhering to all rules, policies, and procedures.
- Any non-compliance with rules, policies, and procedures will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis and may require that individuals complete additional Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) education before being allowed re-entry into the home.

Temporarily Prohibiting a Visitor

- The Pines has the discretion to temporarily prohibit an essential caregiver/visitor in response to repeated non-adherence with the home's rules, policies, and procedures.
- The Pines will reinstate the visits:
 - If the essential caregiver/visitor can demonstrate how they plan to adhere to the requirements;
 - And in consideration any negative impact on staff and resident's health and safety when prohibiting a visit has been alleviated;
 - And consideration on the previous non-compliance of the individual(s) when prohibiting a visit is not expected to recur;
- Decisions to prohibit an essential caregiver will:
 - Be made only after all other reasonable efforts to maintain safety during visits have been exhausted;
 - Stipulate a reasonable length of the prohibition;
 - Identify what requirements the visitor should meet before visits may be resumed; and,
 - Be documented by the Home.

Where the home has temporarily prohibited an essential caregiver/visitor, the resident and/or their substitute decision-maker may need to designate an alternate individual as a caregiver to help meet the care needs of the resident(s).

This policy has been developed guided by the following principles.

Safety: Any approach to visiting must balance the health and safety needs of residents, staff, and visitors, and ensure risks are mitigated.

Education: Education about physical distancing, respiratory etiquette, hand hygiene, infection prevention and control practices (IPAC), and proper use of PPE is essential for all.

Emotional Well-being: Allowing visitors is intended to support the emotional well-being of residents by reducing any potential negative impacts related to social isolation.

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 long-term care home, its staffing availability, and the status of the home for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) are all variables to take into account when setting home-specific policies.

References

- COVID – 19 Directive #3 for Long-Term Care Homes under the Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007
- Ministry of Long-Term Care – COVID-19 Visiting Policy and FAQ's; [ontario.ca/coronavirus](https://www.ontario.ca/coronavirus)
- Centre for Disease Control and Prevention – [cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus)
- Minister's Directive: COVID-19: Long-Term Care Home Surveillance Testing and Access to Homes
- Updated Long-Term Care Sector Surveillance Testing Strategy
- COVID- 19 Directive #5 for Hospitals within the meaning of the Public Hospitals Act and Long-Term Care Homes within the meaning of the Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007.
- COVID-19 guidance document for long-term care homes in Ontario - <https://www.ontario.ca/page/covid-19-guidance-document-long-term-care-homes-ontario#section-1>