

Policy Title: COVID-19 VISITING POLICY

Area: Infection Control

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Directors



Director of Care

CEO

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Minister of Long-Term Care issued the Minister's Directive: COVID-19 Response Measures for Long-Term Care Homes under the *Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021*, effective April 27, 2022 ("the Minister's Directive"). The Minister's Directive requires that licensees comply with provisions contained within this guidance document, as set out in the Minister's Directive.

The Minister's Directive along with the COVID-19 Guidance Document for Long Term Care Homes provides guidance and direction for Long-term care home surveillance testing and access to homes, and establishes requirements for visitation to long-term care homes (LTCH).

POLICY

1.0 Purpose

This COVID-19 Visiting Policy is in place to support the implementation of the requirements of the Minister's Directive: COVID-19 Response Measures for Long-Term Care Homes under the *Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021* and the COVID-19 Guidance Document for Long Term Care Homes, to safely receive visitors while protecting residents, staff and visitors from the risk of COVID-19.

This policy reflects updates made effective June 26, 2023. All previous versions of the visiting policy are revoked and replaced with this version. This policy complies with all applicable laws, including the *Fixing Long Term Care Act, 2021* and [O. Reg. 246/22](#).

This policy is intended to supplement the Minister's Directive and COVID-19 Guidance Document for Long Term Care Homes. In the event that anything in this policy conflicts between either of these documents and any applicable legislation, directive, or order, the legislation, directive or order prevail, and must be followed.

Copernicus Lodge may implement practices and procedures that exceed the minimum requirements set out by the Ministry, based on the risk or situation of the home, residents, staff and caregivers. In these situations, Copernicus Lodge will consult with its local public health unit, Residents' Council and Family Council prior to implementation.

As the COVID-19 Pandemic evolves, 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 its Regulations (Refer to Ontario Regulation 246/22, s. 267)

This visiting policy is 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.
- **Emotional Well-Being** – Welcoming visitors is intended to support the emotional well-being of residents by reducing any potential negative impacts related to social isolation.
- **Equitable Access** – All residents must be given equitable access to receive visitors, consistent with their preferences and within reasonable restrictions that safeguard residents.
- **Flexibility** – The physical and infrastructure characteristics of the home, its workforce or human resources availability, whether the home is in an outbreak and the current status of the home with respect to personal protective equipment (PPE) are all variables to consider when setting home-specific policies.



- **Equality** – Residents have the right to choose their visitors. In addition, residents and/or their substitute decision-makers, as applicable, have the authority to designate caregivers.

Visitors should consider their personal health and susceptibility to the virus in determining whether visiting a LTC home is appropriate.

Visiting Hours:

- **7:00 am – 10:00pm**
- Visitors are permitted 24/7 for those residents at End of Life
- Visitors must enter the home through the Marion Street entrance and not the front entrance of the home
- If emergency access to the home is required after 11:00 pm, please go to the main entrance and speak with security.

3.0 LTC HOME RESPONSIBILITIES

Copernicus Lodge is responsible for supporting residents in receiving visitors while mitigating the risk of exposure to COVID-19. Further, the visiting practices of Copernicus lodge must be compliant with Minister's Directive: COVID-19 Response Measures for Long-Term Care Homes under the *Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021* and the COVID-19 Guidance Document for Long Term Care Homes and align with the guidance in this policy.

Visitor Logs:

In accordance with O. Reg 246/22, s.267 (2), Copernicus Lodge must maintain a visitor log of all visits to the home.

The visitor log will include, at a minimum:

- the name and contact information of the visitor
- time and date of the visit; and
- the name of the resident visited

These visitor logs are kept for a period of at least 30 days and are readily available to the local public health unit for contact tracing purposes upon request.

Access to CL Visitor Policy:

Copernicus Lodge's Visitor policy is posted on our website at: www.copernicuslodge.com

Hard copies are also available upon request. The home also ensures that this policy is part of our package for new admission, and has been communicated and accessible to the Residents Council and Family Councils.

4.0 TYPES OF VISITORS

4.1 **Not Considered Visitors** - LTC home staff (as defined under the Act), volunteers and placement students are not considered visitors as their access to the home is determined by the licensee. Infants under the age of one (1) 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, under this guidance.

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

Essential visitors must complete the required document to be designated as an Essential Visitor and also complete the necessary Infection Prevention and Control training with the IPAC Lead or designate. Please reach out to the Director of Care, Assistant Director of Care or Social Worker to arrange this training.

As per O. Reg. 246/22 under the *Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021*, there are four (4) types of essential visitors:

“Essential Visitor” means:

- i. a caregiver, as defined under section 4 of O. Reg. 246/22
- ii. a support worker who visits a home to provide support to the critical operations of the home or to provide essential services to residents
- iii. a person visiting a very ill resident for compassionate reasons including, but not limited to, hospice services or end-of-life care
- iv. a government inspector with a statutory right to enter a long-term care home to carry out their duties

4.3 **Caregivers**

“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.

Caregiver Visitation Rules:

- Copernicus Lodge does not require scheduling or restrict the length or frequency of visits by caregivers.
- All visitors and caregivers are expected to comply with Copernicus Lodges’ visiting hours

4.4 General Visitors

A general visitor is a person who is **not** an essential visitor and is visiting to provide:

- a) Non-essential services related to either the operations of the home or a particular resident or group of residents.
- b) General visitors include those persons visiting for social reasons as well as;
- c) visitors providing non-essential services such as personal care services, entertainment, or individuals touring the home.

Copernicus Lodge endeavors 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 COPERNICUS LODGE

- Currently there are not visitation restrictions.

5.1 Virtual Visits:

Copernicus Lodge is pleased to offer virtual visits via:

- Telephone
- Zoom, Facebook or Teams meeting

Virtual visits is supported through our programs and services department.

6.0 RESTRICTIONS DURING AN OUTBREAK OR WHEN A RESIDENT IS ISOLATION

In the event of a COVID-19 outbreak or if a resident is on [Additional Precautions](#), Copernicus Lodge will follow the direction and recommendations set out by our local public health unit. All staff and visitors will be required to adhere to recommendations including PPE use, including complying with masking and other personal protective equipment requirements as directed by the outbreak management team and the local public health unit.

7.0 COVID-19 SCREENING REQUIREMENTS

Active screening means there is some form of attestation/confirmation of screening. This is completed in-person on arrival to the home at the security desk.

Passive screening means that those entering the setting review screening questions themselves, and there is no verification of screening (for example, signage at entrances as a visual reminder not to enter if symptomatic).

Copernicus Lodge ensures that COVID-19 screening requirements as set out in the Ministry Guidance document are followed. Screening for illness is an important tool aimed at reducing the risk of infectious illnesses within homes.

Currently, PASSIVE SCREENING, or self-monitoring, for COVID-19 is required for staff, students, volunteers, support workers, caregivers, and general visitors entering the home. This may change at the direction of our local public health unit in the event of an outbreak.

Screening questions – are posted at entrance doors to the home. Anyone entering the home should monitor their health at home for COVID-19 symptoms. Any person feeling ill or who would otherwise fail screening, is not permitted to enter the home.

Currently, Copernicus Lodge does not require nor request verification or an attestation that individuals (staff or visitors) have passed the screening protocols upon entry to the home.

Visitors to the home will continue to see signage at entrances and throughout the home that lists the signs and symptoms of COVID-19, need for self-monitoring and steps that must be taken if COVID-19 is suspected or confirmed in any individual.

For residents, while active screening upon return from an absence and daily temperature checks are no longer required, LTC homes will continue to be required to monitor residents daily to detect the presence of infection, including COVID-19, per section 3 of the IPAC Standard.

8.0 COVID-19 ASYMPTOMATIC TESTING REQUIREMENTS

- *Currently there are no asymptomatic testing requirements for visitors or staff.*
- Testing of symptomatic residents will continue and staff, students, volunteers, general visitors, caregivers and support workers are encouraged to get tested if symptomatic.

9.0 VISITATION – GENERAL INFORMATION

- 9.1 Currently there are NO COVID related visitor restrictions when not in outbreak.
- 9.2 As per the Fixing Long-Term Care Act' 2021, all residents have a right to receive visitors
- 9.3 As per section 267(1) of O. Reg 246/22, essential visitors which includes caregivers, support workers, persons visiting for compassionate reasons, including for end-of-life care and inspectors, continue to have access the long-term care homes during an outbreak. Homes must follow the directions from their local public health unit during and outbreak, which may include advising general visitors to postpone all non-essential visits.

10.0 NON-ADHERENCE BY VISITORS

Non-compliance with the home's policies, including harassment, bullying, and intimidation of Copernicus Lodge staff and physicians, may result in a discontinuation of visits for the non-compliant visitor and/or temporarily prohibiting a visitor.

10.1 Temporarily Prohibiting a Visitor

- a. Copernicus Lodge 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, consideration will be given to whether the non-adherence:

- i. can be resolved successfully by explaining and demonstrating how the visitor can adhere to the requirements
- ii. is with requirements that align with the guidance identified in this policy
- iii. negatively impact the health and safety of residents, staff, and other visitors in the home
- iv. is demonstrated continuously by the visitor over multiple visits
- v. is by a visitor whose previous visits have been ended by the home
- vi. Any decision to temporarily prohibit a visitor will:
 - Be made only after all other reasonable efforts to maintain safety during visits have been exhausted;
 - Stipulate a reasonable length of the prohibition, to be determined by Copernicus Lodge upon review of the circumstances;
 - Clearly identify what requirements the visitor should meet before visits may be resumed (e.g. reviewing the home’s visitor policy, reviewing the home’s Code of Conduct, etc.); and,
 - Be documented by the home.

11.0 PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT USE

Masks:

- Currently masks are recommended but not required in all areas of the home
- This means that caregivers and visitors may now join in sharing a meal with their loved one(s) in communal dining areas

Exceptions to masking requirements are:

- Children who are younger than 2 years of age
- Any individual who is being accommodated in accordance with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act 2005* or the *Ontario human Rights Code*.

Hand Hygiene:

- All visitors are reminded to wash their hands on entry and exiting the home, including prior to and following interactions with your loved ones.

Eye Protection:

- Eye protection is required by visitors when providing care to residents with suspected of confirmed COVI-19 and in the provision of direct care within two (2) meters of resident in an outbreak area.

Physical Distancing

- Currently there are no COVID specific requirements or restrictions related to physical distancing when not in outbreak.

12.0 COMMUNAL DINING

Communal dining is an important part of our residents social environment. Caregivers and general visitors may accompany a resident for meals to assist them with eating or to join in for the meal. Any visitor who wishes to share a meal with a resident is required to purchase a meal ticket from the front reception desk.

IPAC practices such as hand hygiene must be followed in communal dining areas.

13.0 GROUP ACTIVITIES

There are currently no COVID-specific requirements or restrictions related to group activities when not in outbreak. Visitors and caregivers may join residents for group activities including enjoying food and beverages during group activities. IPAC practices should continue to be followed in communal spaces to promote safety and well-being.

14.0 INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL EDUCATION FOR VISITORS:

Copernicus Lodge provides education and training to all visitors about physical distancing, respiratory etiquette, hand hygiene, IPAC practices, and proper use of PPE.

Caregivers that are going to be assisting residents with feeding are required to complete education on ***Safe Feeding practices*** prior to the first instance of feeding the resident. This training will be provided by the Dietitian at Copernicus Lodge. This training is required on an annual basis to maintain awareness of new practices and evidence-based safe practices. Training can be arranged by contacting the Registered Dietitian or Manager of Dietary Services

Below are examples of relevant training materials including instructional videos and guidance from the following [Public Health Ontario resources](#) to support IPAC and PPE education and training:

1. Public Health Ontario resources: <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/diseases-and-conditions/infectious-diseases/respiratory-diseases/novel-coronavirus/long-term-care-resources>
2. guidance document: recommended steps: putting on personal protective equipment

[https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/ipac/ppe-recommended-steps\)](https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/ipac/ppe-recommended-steps)

3. video: putting on full personal protective equipment
<https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/Videos/I/2021/IPAC-FullPPE-On>
4. video: taking off full personal protective equipment
<https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/Videos/I/2021/IPAC-FullPPE-Off>
5. videos: how to hand wash and how to hand rub
<https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/Videos/I/2021/IPAC-Handwash>
<https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/Videos/I/2020/IPAC-Handrub>

Hand Hygiene:

Proper Hand Hygiene is the single most effective method of limiting the transmission of infections.



- Use soap and water should be used when hands are visibly soiled
- Alcohol based hand rub should be used if no visible dirt is present on the hands
- Remember to wash/rub for 15 seconds
- Alcohol based hand rub is available throughout the home

Ref: *How to Handwash - Public Health Ontario*. https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/j/2009/jcyh-handwash.pdf?la=en&sc_lang=en&hash=5A5A17D05B5A2297014EFCC50356EBD7.

Respiratory Etiquette:



COVER YOUR COUGH
Stop the spread of germs that can make you and others sick!

Public Health Ontario | Santé publique Ontario

Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
Put your used tissue in the waste basket.

If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve or elbow, not your hands.

You may be asked to put on a facemask to protect others.

Wash hands often with soap and warm water for 15 seconds.
If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.

For more information contact Public Health Ontario's Infection Prevention and Control Department at ipac@ohpp.ca or visit www.publichealthontario.ca/en/health-topics/infection-prevention-control/clinical-office-practice.
This is an excerpt from Infection Prevention and Control for Clinical Office Practice

Ontario 

Ref: *Cover Your Cough* - Public Health Ontario. <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/C/2013/clinical-office-cough-signage.pdf>.

Putting on PPE's (Donning PPEs)

**Recommended Steps:
Putting On Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

Public Health Ontario | Santé publique Ontario

1. Perform Hand Hygiene



2. Put on Gown

- Tie neck and waist ties securely



5. Put on Gloves

- Put on gloves, taking care not to tear or puncture glove
- If a gown is worn, the glove fits over the gown's cuff



3. Put on Mask/N95 Respirator

- Place mask over nose and under chin
- Secure ties, loops or straps
- Mould metal piece to your nose bridge
- For respirators, perform a seal-check



4. Put on Protective Eyewear

- Put on eye protection and adjust to fit
- Face shield should fit over brow



For more information, please contact Public Health Ontario's Infection Prevention and Control Department at ipac@oahpp.ca or visit www.publichealthontario.ca.



Ref: *PPE Recommended Steps* | Public Health Ontario. <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/ipac/ppe-recommended-steps>.

Removing PPE's (Doffing PPEs)

Recommended Steps: Taking Off Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Public Health Ontario | Santé publique Ontario


1. Remove Gloves

- Remove gloves using a glove-to-glove / skin-to-skin technique
- Grasp outside edge near the wrist and peel away, rolling the glove inside-out
- Reach under the second glove and peel away
- Discard immediately into waste receptacle

2. Remove Gown

- Remove gown in a manner that prevents contamination of clothing or skin
- Starting with waist ties, then neck ties, pull the gown forward from the neck ties and roll it so that the contaminated outside of the gown is to the inside. Roll off the arms into a bundle, then discarded immediately in a manner that minimizes air disturbance.

6. Perform Hand Hygiene



3. Perform Hand Hygiene


5. Remove Mask/ N95 Respirator

- Ties/ear loops/straps are considered 'clean' and may be touched with hands
- The front of the mask/respirator is considered to be contaminated
- Untie bottom tie then top tie, or grasp straps or ear loops
- Pull forward off the head, bending forward to allow mask/respirator to fall away from the face
- Discard immediately into waste receptacle

4. Remove Eye Protection

- Arms of goggles and headband of face shields are considered to be 'clean' and may be touched with the hands
- The front of goggles/face shield is considered to be contaminated
- Remove eye protection by handling ear loops, sides or back only
- Discard into waste receptacle or into appropriate container to be sent for reprocessing
- Personally-owned eyewear may be cleaned by the individual after each use

This is an excerpt from Routine Practices and Additional Precautions In All Health Care Settings (Appendix L) and was reformatted for ease of use.



Ref: *PPE Recommended Steps* / Public Health Ontario. <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/ipac/ppe-recommended-steps>.

15.0 ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

- Supplies and equipment within the home are not available for use by visitors without the express permission of the home.
- Caregivers/visitors are asked to be respectful of the goods and property of others.
- Smoking is prohibited in the home and within nine meters surrounding any entrance/exit and visitors must maintain 6 feet distancing from residents, staff and other visitors while smoking.
- Pets are permitted; however, each pet **must be registered** with the home including providing proof of annual vaccinations PRIOR to visiting. Any person wishing to register their pet must contact the Manager of Programs and Services. Additionally, any person bringing in a pet may only visit with their loved one in the resident's room and not in common areas of the home as there may be other residents, staff or visitors with allergies or fear of animals.

16.0 ACCESSIBILITY CONSIDERATIONS

Copernicus Lodge adheres to all applicable laws including the *Accessibility for Ontarians Disability Act, 2005*.

LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

FLTCHA, 2021, Ontario Regulation 246/22, s. 267

Visitor policy

267. (1) Every licensee of a long-term care home shall establish and implement a written visitor policy which at a minimum,

- (a) includes the process for visitor access during non-outbreak situations and during an outbreak of a communicable disease or an outbreak of a disease of public health significance, an epidemic or a pandemic;
- (b) includes the process for documenting and keeping a written record of,
 - (i) the designation of a caregiver; and
 - (ii) the approval from a parent or legal guardian to permit persons under 16 years of age to be designated as a caregiver, if applicable;
- (c) complies 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*; and
- (d) ensures that essential visitors continue to have access to the long-term care home during an outbreak of a communicable disease, an outbreak of a disease of public health significance, an epidemic or a pandemic, subject to any applicable laws.

(2) Every licensee of a long-term care home shall maintain visitor logs for a minimum of 30 days which include, at a minimum,

- (a) the name and contact information of the visitor;
- (b) the time and date of the visit; and
- (c) the name of the resident visited.

(3) Every licensee of a long-term care home shall ensure that the current version of the visitor policy is provided to the Residents' Council and Family Council, if any.

(4) In this section,

“essential visitor” means,

- (a) a caregiver,
- (b) a support worker who visits a home to provide support to the critical operations of the home or to provide essential services to residents,
- (c) a person visiting a very ill resident for compassionate reasons including, but not limited to, hospice services or end-of-life care, or
- (d) a government inspector with a statutory right to enter a long-term care home to carry out their duties.

REFERENCES

“Law Document English View.” *Ontario.Ca*, 19 Nov. 2018, www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/21f39.

“Covid-19 Guidance Document for Long-Term Care Homes in Ontario.” *Ontario.Ca*, www.ontario.ca/page/covid-19-guidance-document-long-term-care-homes-ontario. Accessed 5 July. 2023.