

JUNE 16, 2020

Communicating with Visitors/Caregivers:

LTC Toolkit for Outdoor Visits

COVID-19 PANDEMIC CAREGIVER SUPPORT WORKING GROUP

COVID-19 COMMUNITY SOUTH WEST PANDEMIC PLANNING TABLE

NON HOSPITAL SECTOR TABLE

PURPOSE:

As a sub-project working group of the COVID-19 Community South West (SW) Pandemic Planning Table, our group has been focused on caregiver support during COVID-19. We were tasked with developing a toolkit to support Long-Term Care homes in communicating with visitors/caregivers regarding resuming visits (Directive #3: June 10, 2020).

The information and documents included in this toolkit are intended to be a resource for LTC homes across the SW region. We expect LTC homes will customize based on their individual homes.

We hope that this will be useful for you in communicating and supporting visitors/caregivers, LTC residents and staff in this first phase of visiting: Outdoor Only Visits.

We wish to thank members of the South West Frail Senior Strategy’s Regional Patient and Family Advisory Group for contributing their valuable thoughts and idea.

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This toolkit focuses on communicating with visitors, however communicating and supporting residents and staff, in parallel, is essential.

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Visitor is defined as any family member, friend or neighbour of a Long Term Care (LTC) Resident's preference

| Area of Focus | Considerations |
|---|---|
| Communication with LTC Residents, Families and LTC Staff | <input type="checkbox"/> Letters <input type="checkbox"/> Social Media <input type="checkbox"/> Virtual Town Hall <input type="checkbox"/> Telephone Call <input type="checkbox"/> Email <input type="checkbox"/> Automated Voice mail <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
| Type of Visit | Phase 1: Outdoor Visits Only (Directive #3: June 10, 2020) |
| Location of Visits | Designated Space outside the LTC Home Consider: <input type="checkbox"/> distance required for resident, staff and visitor to travel <input type="checkbox"/> adequate protection from weather elements <input type="checkbox"/> entry points closest to resident <input type="checkbox"/> ability to maintain physical distancing <input type="checkbox"/> ability to complete Infection Prevention and Control procedures <input type="checkbox"/> needs of resident, staff and visitor while outdoors (i.e. equipment needed to communicate, cell phone for staff, etc.) <input type="checkbox"/> friendliness of space |
| Number of Visitors | <input type="checkbox"/> One visitor at a time per LTC resident <input type="checkbox"/> If not advisable or possible for a visitor to participate in outdoor visits, LTC Homes should continue to provide virtual visiting options to compensate |
| Duration of Visits | <input type="checkbox"/> Minimum 30 minutes per visit <input type="checkbox"/> If unable to meet suggested Ministry of LTC guideline, consider prioritizing visits due to relative clinical or emotional decline; residents who are expressing feelings of loneliness |
| Frequency of Visits | <input type="checkbox"/> Minimum 1 visit per week <input type="checkbox"/> If unable to meet suggested Ministry of LTC guideline, it is important to communicate with visitors and be transparent about reasons why |

| | |
|---|---|
| Scheduling of Visits | Develop Process (options to consider): <input type="checkbox"/> Online <input type="checkbox"/> Telephone <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
| Staffing Resources | Staff to support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ transfer of residents out of and into the LTC Home ○ ensuring physical distancing, proper PPE and hand hygiene for both resident and visitor ○ Infection Prevention and Control procedures in between visits (e.g. disinfecting surfaces, etc.) ○ scheduling visits ○ screening visitors ○ any additional resident care required (during and following visits) |
| Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) | Visitor to bring their own face covering <input type="checkbox"/> If a visitor is unable to obtain a face covering, LTC home to provide |
| Logging Visitor Information | For contact tracing purposes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> create and maintain a list of visitors <input type="checkbox"/> include dates and times of visits |
| Screening Process | Timing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Screen visitor upon arrival to LTC Home <input type="checkbox"/> Screen visitor in advance by telephone <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
| Education regarding PPE, Hand Hygiene, Physical Distancing and Respiratory Etiquette | Create and disseminate information package to visitors in advance of scheduled visits on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> PPE (safe and proper use) <input type="checkbox"/> Hand Hygiene <input type="checkbox"/> Physical Distancing <input type="checkbox"/> Respiratory Etiquette (coughing and sneezing safely) |
| Non-adherence Policy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Develop approach to address issues of visitor non-adherence to LTC home policy and procedures, including the discontinuation of visits (this will be at the sole discretion of each LTC Home) <input type="checkbox"/> Develop appeals process |
| Resident, Visitor and Staff Experience | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Consider surveying residents (if able), visitors and staff once resumption of visits has taken place; it is an excellent time to co-design on-going improvements together <input type="checkbox"/> Reach out to your Resident and Family Councils to truly partner and facilitate safe and meaningful engagement |

Communicating with Visitors: Timing

This section will provide suggestions on timing the information you share in order to keep visitors informed.

Too much information at once is not a good thing. Leaving long stretches in between communication is also not good.

Consider staging your communication and think about identifying a designated person to receive questions or concerns.

STEP 1

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

TIMING: As soon as possible

MODE OF COMMUNICATION: Broad sharing on webpage, social media, newsletter, etc.

KEY MESSAGES:

- Acknowledgement of government announcement and what it means
- Recognition that your LTC home is making arrangements
- Timeline on when/how visitors will learn more about the details
- Information on who to contact if visitors have questions/concerns

EXAMPLE: See Appendix A for Sample template letter that you can customize

STEP 2

THE DETAILS

TIMING: When most of the details are becoming finalized

MODE OF COMMUNICATION: Targeted sharing by letter, phone call, email

KEY MESSAGES:

- Details on how visitors schedule a visit
- What do visitors need to in advance
- What should visitors expect day-of
- If they have questions/concerns/feedback, who do they contact

EXAMPLE: See Appendix B for Sample template letter that you can customize

STEP 3

FOLLOW-UP

TIMING: Shortly before visit

MODE OF COMMUNICATION: Personal communication by phone call or email

KEY MESSAGES:

- Confirm information from previous steps
- Finalize any details that have changed
- Ask visitors if they have any questions/concerns

Communicating with Visitors: Key Topics

This section will provide suggestions on what to include in your information sharing – what information visitors want to know.

How does scheduling work for a visitor?

- How does someone get identified as a visitor?
- Who do they call/email to request a visit?
- What will the duration of the visit be?
- How frequent can they visit?

What does the visitor need to do in advance to prepare?

- When will they be screened?
- What education do they need and how will a visitor receive it?
- Where do they get a mask? How do they make their own?
- Do they need to go get tested? When should they go? How long will they wait for a result?

What should the visitor expect day-of?

- Where is the location of the visit? Where do they park? Where do they go?
- When should they arrive?
- What can they bring with them? What should they leave at home?
- What are your expectations of them? What happens if they do not adhere?



Consider taking a video and photos to show the visitors the outdoor space

Who should the visitor contact for more information?

Communicating with Visitors: Approach and Accessibility

This section will provide suggestions on how to phrase and format your communications with visitors to establish an effective team approach with everyone on the same page.

✓ THINK ABOUT YOUR APPROACH

This has been a very difficult time for everyone, including the visitors who have not seen their loved ones in person for a very long time. They play a **critical role** in providing caregiving and support that is essential for the quality of life of residents. They are excited to see their loved one, but also nervous and worried about causing transmission of the virus.

Treat Visitors as Allies in Keeping Everyone Safe and Not a Risk

Consider your tone and approach in communicating with visitors and how it will be received. Try to frame your expectations in a positive, helpful light and be thoughtful in your choice of words.

YOUR WORDS

MATTER

| Instead of... | Consider ... |
|---|--|
| Do not physically embrace with your loved one | In order to keep everyone safe, please maintain the recommended 6 feet/2 metres apart. |
| Do not arrive early for appointment | Please arrive only 5 minutes before your visit. |
| Supervised visits | Staff will support the visits. |
| Do not stay longer than your allotted time | In order to ensure we get as many visits in as possible, please keep your visits to 30 minutes. |
| 30 minute allotments | 30 minute visits |
| Visits may be cancelled at any time due to... | We will do our best to not cancel any scheduled visits, however, there may be times when it is necessary to keep everyone safe. We will work with you to reschedule as soon as possible. |
| Please do not call us to book an appointment, we will call you | To start, our team will reach out to you to book visits. |
| Do not bring pets | Please hold off from bringing pets. |
| Exit our property immediately at the conclusion of the visit | In order to help us minimize crowds, please return to your vehicle at the end of your visit. |
| Do not give your loved one a gift | Please make arrangements with staff for any deliveries to your loved one. We can help do this in a safe way. |



ENSURE YOU ARE MAKING THE INFORMATION ACCESSIBLE

Many people have difficulty understanding information, particularly related to health care. Consider the following suggestions related to health literacy and senior friendly principles in order to maximize someone's ability to read and comprehend the important information you are giving them.

Only use two fonts;
one for the headings and one for the text

Use upper and lower case letters,
avoid ALL CAPS

Use San Serif
text

Use at LEAST
12 point font

Avoid italics

Use bullet
points

Set-up 2.5" margins and use lots of white
space and visuals

Use dark text on white
background

Left justify
text

Avoid glossy
paper

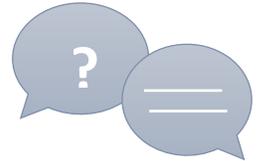
Refrain
from watermarks

Avoid
Shadowing

Communicating with Visitors: FAQs and Resources

This section will provide some suggestions for questions you may have and a list of resources/facilities that have already introduced outdoor visiting.

Frequently Asked Questions



1. What do we say if we can't introduce outdoor visiting exactly as the government has laid out at this time?

- Be upfront and transparent about why you can't introduce visiting as outlined. Provide a simple, straightforward reason. Acknowledge that this is not an ideal situation.
- Outline what you can offer at this time while you work to improve the situation.
- Provide a simple overview of the steps you are taking to improve the situation.
- Let visitors know when they can expect to hear an update on the situation.
- Give a designated contact of they speak to in the interim if they have questions/concerns.

2. What do we say if a visitor wants to visit and the request can't be accommodated?

- Be upfront and transparent about why they can't visit at this time. Acknowledge that this is not an ideal situation.
- Outline what you can offer as an alternative, e.g. virtual/window visit.
- Provide the steps you are taking to improve the situation.
- Let the visitor know when they can expect to hear an update or when the decision can be re-evaluated.
- Give a designated contact of who they can speak to if they have further/concerns.

Resources

There are a number of different organizations that are also working out how to implement outdoor visiting in Long-Term Care, as well as wondering how to effectively partner and communicate with visitors. The following chart will provide you with some examples and resources of how to develop your own communications and what to consider.

| Organization | Type of Resources Developed |
|--|--|
| Provincial Guidelines and Resources | |
| Government of Ontario | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Directive #3 for Long-Term Care Homes under the Long-Term Care Act, 2007 (June 10, 2020)</u> • <u>Resuming Visits in Long-Term Care Homes</u> • <u>FAQ Directive 3 LTC Visitors and Admissions</u> • <u>Posters for LTC Visitors and Checklist for Staff (English)</u> • <u>Posters for LTC Visitors and Checklist for Staff (French)</u> |
| Examples Developed to Date | |
| <u>Alberta Health Services</u> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poster example |
| <u>Dufferin Oaks Long Term Care Home</u> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter example |
| <u>Indiana State Department of Health</u> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FAQ example |
| <u>Saskatchewan Health Authority</u> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family Presence Guidance • FAQ example • Family Presence Commitment example • Poster example |
| Additional Resources | |
| <u>CanAge</u> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 tips and ideas for safer visits at LTC homes • Considerations for visiting people with dementia in LTC homes |
| <u>Institute for Patient-and Family-Centred Care</u> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidance on how to communicate with patients and families about changes to family presence policies, how to maintain connections between patients and their loved ones under circumstances when presence is restricted, and how to engage and continue to partner with patient and family advisors. |
| <u>Planetree International and the Pioneer Network</u> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-designed guidelines that aim to balance socio-economic needs with clinical safety needs, balance the needs of individuals with the needs of the community, and support person-centred care principles. |

Appendix A: Sample Template Letter to Visitors – Acknowledging Directive #3 (June 10, 2020) Resuming Visits in Long-Term Care Homes: Outdoor Visiting

Dear _____,

In response to the COVID-19 crisis, temporary visiting restrictions were put in place across all Long-Term Care (LTC) homes in Ontario in March 2020. The top priority has been to protect LTC residents and staff from the introduction and spread of this disease. This has been a very difficult time and thank you for your ongoing commitment and support to keep everyone safe during this pandemic. We recognize the critical role that families, visitors and loved ones play in providing caregiving and emotional support and that this is very important to the quality of life for LTC residents.

As LTC residents are especially vulnerable, the government is proposing a gradual, safe and careful plan to resume visits to LTC homes. On June 11th, the government announced that the first phase of visiting will be outdoor visits at LTC homes which can begin as early as June 18th for LTC homes that are ready. For more details on the plan, please visit the Ministry of Long-Term Care's guidance document: [Resuming Visits in Long-Term Care Homes](#).

What is an outdoor visit?

Each LTC home will create a dedicated area outside the building where a visitor can meet with a resident. The visitor will need to bring a mask to wear throughout the visit and will be asked to maintain physical distancing of 6 feet/2 metres at all times to ensure everyone's safety. Staff will support the transition of residents out of and into the home for visits.

Who can visit?

To begin, one visitor of the LTC resident's preference can visit at a time. The visitor can be a family member, close friend or neighbour. Before the visit, the LTC home will be providing the visitor with the necessary education on safety procedures that will need to be followed in order to make it a safe and successful visit for all involved.

When will outdoor visiting begin?

We know you are excited to visit your loved ones as soon as possible. We ask for your patience as we are actively in the process of preparing for how our LTC home will offer outdoor visits in a safe and meaningful way. We will contact you with more information once our plan is in place and we have a better idea of our date to begin these important visits. All visits will be pre-arranged in advance.

What do I need to do to prepare?

We have received guidelines from the Ministry of Long Term Care on what visitors need to do in order to keep everyone safe during an outdoor visit – masking, testing, completing screening for signs and symptoms of COVID-19. We are currently working on how we will carry out these guidelines at our LTC home. While we sort this out, **please hold off from doing any testing**. We will let you know what you need to do in order to have an outdoor visit.

Please note that should our LTC Home enter into an outbreak of COVID-19 at any time, all visits will be suspended as LTC Homes must follow all Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health’s directives and guidance from local Public Health Units. In addition, if a LTC resident is showing symptoms of COVID-19, visits will not be permitted. We will do our best not to cancel any visits, but things such as weather conditions or staffing may impact scheduling.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact:_____.

We look forward to seeing you soon and having you connect with your loved one in-person!

Sincerely,

LTC Home

Appendix B: Sample Template Letter to Visitors with Details of Visits

Resuming Visits in Long-Term Care Homes: Outdoor Visiting

Dear _____,

As you are aware, we have received guidance from the Ministry of Long-Term Care (LTC) to resume a gradual and safe approach to the reopening of Long Term Care Homes to visitors. We are pleased as we appreciate the critical role families, visitors and loved ones play in the ongoing physical and mental well-being of LTC residents. While virtual and window visits have certainly been positive and essential, we know they are not a substitute for in-person visiting. By working together, we can ensure outdoor visits are successful and meaningful for everyone.

The first phase, 'Outdoor Visiting Only' will begin on insert date.

The Ministry of Long Term Care has recommended for Phase 1: Outdoor Visiting Only

One visitor (of the resident's preference) can visit, at a minimum, once weekly for a minimum of 30 minutes. A visitor is defined as any family member, close friend or neighbour.

Visitors will:

- Respectfully work with the LTC Home
- Participate in education on the safe and proper use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), hand hygiene, physical distancing and respiratory etiquette (coughing and sneezing safely)
- Respect and follow all safety practices, policies and procedures implemented by the LTC home designed to protect LTC residents, staff and visitors

Visitors must inform the LTC home immediately if symptoms develop after visiting a LTC resident and take appropriate next steps. Any non-adherence to these requirements will be the basis for discontinuation of visits.

Long Term Care Home will:

- Respectfully work with visitors and treat them with kindness and compassion
- Provide education to visitors on the safe and proper use of PPE, hand hygiene, physical distancing and respiratory etiquette
- Screen all visitors according to Directives and/or policies prior to visiting
- Clean and disinfect the visiting area in between visits
- Communicate in a timely and transparent way to ensure visitors and LTC residents are made aware of any changes to visiting guidelines
- Continue to ensure additional ways for LTC residents to remain connected with you (window visits, virtual visits, etc.) to compensate for limited visits

Preparations:

We are actively in the process of preparing for outdoor visiting.

LTC Homes are:

- Organizing a visiting schedule based on 30 minute visits for each LTC resident and their visitor. We will endeavor to achieve one visit weekly, however this may be impacted by external factors, such as weather conditions or staffing. All visits will be pre-arranged.
- Going to contact you individually by phone/email to schedule the first week of visits and inform you of what you need to do in advance. We ask for your patience as we set up this system. Details of your visit and what to expect will be discussed with you during these phone calls/emails.
- Going to send out an information package to you on: how to use PPE safely, physical distancing, respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene.

Visitors need to:

- Stay tuned for further information from the LTC Home regarding preparations.
- Get tested for COVID-19 as visitors need to declare that you have tested negative for COVID-19 within the previous two weeks and subsequently not tested positive.
- Obtain your own face covering (mask) in preparation for outdoor visits. We ask that you maintain physical distancing of 6 feet/2 metres from the LTC resident and staff during visits to ensure everyone's safety.
- Be screened by LTC Home staff prior to/upon arrival for your scheduled visit; if visitors fail screening, they will be asked to go home, self-isolate and will be encouraged to get tested.
- Remember not to bring pets or outside food/beverages to the visit.

We hope you consider your personal health and susceptibility to the COVID-19 virus in determining whether visiting a LTC Home is appropriate. **Please do not visit the LTC Home if you feel unwell.** Where it is not possible or advisable to visit given your personal circumstances, rest assured we will continue to provide virtual visiting options/window visits.

Please note that should our LTC Home enter into an outbreak of COVID-19 at any time, all visits will be suspended as LTC homes must follow the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health's directives and guidance from local Public Health Units. In addition, if a LTC resident is showing symptoms of COVID-19, visits will not be permitted at that time.

We are happy to be resuming visits and look forward to a time where restrictions can be further lifted. Thank you for your understanding and cooperation as we navigate this unprecedented time together. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact:

_____.

Sincerely,

LTC Home NAME