

<b>Section Number: Nursing Unit Management</b>	<b>Policy Number: F-015</b>
<b>Category: Visitor Policy</b>	<b>Implementation Date: November 23, 2020</b>
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**VISITOR POLICY – LONG-TERM CARE AND RETIREMENT HOME**

**PURPOSE**

The Elliott Community recognizes that connecting with friends and family is essential to our resident's emotional health and well-being. Current directives from the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Long-Term Care and Public Health Ontario guidelines must be adhered to in order to support our visitors safely. Our visits are guided by these directives and guidelines as well as the principles that are listed below:

- ✓ **Safety:** Any approach to visiting must balance the health and safety needs of residents, staff, and visitors and ensure risks are mitigated.
- ✓ **Mental Health and Emotional Well-being:** Allowing visitors is intended to support the emotional well-being of residents by reducing any potential negative impacts of 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 characteristics /infrastructure of the Home, its staffing availability, whether the Home is in outbreak or in an area of widespread community transmission, and the current status of the Home concerning infection prevention and control (IPAC), including personal protective equipment (PPE) are all variables to take into account when administering home-specific policies for visiting, absences, and activities.
- ✓ **Autonomy:** Residents have the right to choose their visitors. Residents also have the right to designate their caregivers. If a resident cannot do so, substitute decision-maker(s) may designate caregivers.

**Co-Located Home**

In co-located long-term care and retirement homes that are not physically and operationally independent, the policies for the long-term care home and the retirement home should align where possible or follow the more restrictive requirements unless otherwise directed by the local public health unit (PHU) based on COVID-19 prevention and containment.

**STANDARDS**

- Visitors must sign in, and Visitor Logs will be located at the entrance and are to be completed upon entering the Home by **ALL** visitors. Visitor Logs will be maintained for a minimum of 30 days and include the following information: the name and contact information of the visitor, the date and time of the visit, and the name of the resident visited.
- The resident must designate essential Caregivers, or if the resident cannot do so, their substitute decision-maker (SDM). The designation should be made in writing to the Elliott Community.
- Visitors will be made aware of the expectations relating to health and safety and any specific visitation requirements or restrictions arising from applicable laws and guidelines. Visitors have a crucial role in reducing the risk of infection for the safety of residents and staff by adhering to visitor policy requirements related to screening, IPAC and PPE and any precautions described in this policy.
- Visitors will be made aware of this policy and the expectation of their adherence. Nonadherence may be the basis for terminating visits and future visits.
- Staff are responsible for approaching unknown visitors and offering assistance in a courteous and non-threatening manner.
- A copy of the visitor policy will be given upon admission to the Home within the admission package

- Updated versions of the policy will be distributed to the resident and family council at the next scheduled meeting after the revisions have taken place.
- Pets are allowed but must adhere to the criteria outlined in our pet policy. Up-to-date vaccinations, on a leash at all times, pet to be sitting on a lap blanket if the resident is holding them, pets are not allowed if the Home is an outbreak.

## **PROCEDURE**

### **Upon Arrival Between the Hours of 9:30 am and 7:00 pm**

- Practice hand hygiene upon entering the building, before exiting and frequently throughout the visit.
- Self-monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 and other infectious diseases before coming into the Home.
- Medical masks will continue to be available upon home entry. The Elliott Community is a "Mask Friendly" environment. Visitors, staff and residents who continue to want to wear medical masks will be supported to wear a medical mask.
- Visitors are required to sign in upon arrival and sign out after the visit.

### ***Upon Arrival Outside of Visiting Hours***

When visiting outside of visiting hours, the visitor will follow the following steps:

- Call the nurse working in your loved ones' home area to inform them of your arrival.
- Medical masks will continue to be available upon home entry.
- The nurse will provide access to the home via the entrance door.
- Upon entering, sanitize your hands.

### **Outbreak/ Resident on Isolation**

- The process for visitor access during an outbreak or when a resident is isolated will be based on the requirements set out in applicable laws, including implementing all required public health measures and IPAC best practices and may include restriction and additional protective equipment and measures during an outbreak.

Visiting policies are on the website – [www.elliottcommunity.org](http://www.elliottcommunity.org)

**Training on Infection Control Practices is still recommended. Please see below for educational resources:**

- <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/videos/ipac-fullppe-on>
- <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/videos/ipac-fullppe-off>
- <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/factsheet/factsheet-covid-19-hand-hygiene.pdf?la=en>
- <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/r/2012/rpap-risk-assessment.pdf?la=en>

### **How We Will Respond to Non-Compliance of Visiting Policy**

The Elliott Community recognizes that connecting with family is essential to the emotional well-being of the residents. As such, the Home will strive to resolve issues or concerns that may arise from non-compliance with the visiting policy by ensuring:

- Efforts have been made to ensure that the visitor understands the policy;
- It is recognized that visits are critical to residents' emotional well-being, and the impact on the resident in discontinuing visits is considered;
- The consequences of the action reflect the severity of the concern; and

- Where visits have been suspended, the Home will identify the training needed before the visitor can return to the Home.

### **Ending a Visit**

The Home will end a visit with a visitor if they fail to adhere to the Homes policy. The Home will consider this when:

- The Home has explained the policy and its requirements to the visitor;
- The visitor has the resources to meet the requirements of the policy (i.e. there is enough space, the Home has provided PPE and training on its use); and
- The visitor has been given time to adhere to the requirements.

When a visit is ended due to non-adherence, the Home will document the concern and the actions taken.

### **Complaints Process**

Should a visitor have a complaint about the administration of the residence's visiting policy, they may contact the Home's Administrator and the complaint will be responded to in a timely manner.

If your concern is not resolved to your satisfaction with the residence's management, visitors may contact the Retirement Homes Authority (RHRA) by email ([info@rhra.ca](mailto:info@rhra.ca)) and/or phone (1-855-275-7472).

For Long-Term Care, visitors may contact the Long-Term Care Family Support and Action Line: toll-free at 1-866-434-0144.

### **REFERENCES**

Ministry of Long-Term Care (June 23, 2023). COVID-19 Guidance Document for Long-Term Care Homes in Ontario.

Ministry of Long-Term Care (March 22, 2023). COVID-19 guidance document for long-term care homes in Ontario.

Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility COVID-19 Guidance for Retirement Homes in Ontario (March 23, 2023).

COVID-19 Guidance: Long-Term Care Homes, Retirement Homes, and Other Congregate Living Settings for Public Health Units, January 18, 2023