

# Leadership and Partnership



**SECTION:** E-Key Stakeholders

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**SUBJECT:** Visitor Policy

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**APPROVED BY:** Pat Bedford

**Effective Date:** July 17, 2022

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## Overview:

Sharon Village Care Homes is committed to ensuring that all person-served are able to have continued support through the visitation of families, friends, caregivers, or any other person of significance. SVCH recognizes the importance that visitation has on the physical, mental, social, and emotional well-being and quality of life of each person served.

- o Sharon Village Care Homes has aligned the Visitor's Policy with the Resident's Bill of Rights, under the Fixing Long Term Care Act (FLTCA), 2021, and O. Reg. 246/22:
- o Every resident has the right to communicate in confidence, receive visitors of their choice and consult in private with any person without interference. (*FLTCA, 2021-Residents Bill of Rights #6*)
- o Every resident has the right to have any friend, family member, caregiver, or any person of importance to the resident attend any meeting with the licensee or the staff of the home. (*FLTCA, 2021—Residents Bill of Rights #21*)
- o Every resident who is dying or is very ill has the right to have family and friends present 24 hours per day. (*FLTCA, 2021-Residents Bill of Rights #26*)

It is the expectation of SVCH, that every resident will be provided with ongoing and safe support from their caregivers to support their physical, mental, social, and emotional well-being and their quality of life and each Home will provide needed assistance in contacting a caregiver or other person to support the individual resident needs and choices.

As the COVID-19 pandemic has evolved, various Directives and Guidance Documents have been issued by the Chief Medical Officer of Health which establish requirements for visits to long-term care homes. As the Directives are phased out, it is the responsibility of the home to protect 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. SVCH is committed to providing policies that balance resident rights and risk.

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

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- **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/infrastructure characteristics of the home, its staffing 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 take into account when setting home-specific policies.
- **Equality** – Residents have the right to choose their visitors. In addition, residents and/or their substitute decision-makers have the right to designate caregivers.

## POLICY

Sharon Village Care Homes is committed to supporting residents in receiving visitors while mitigating the risk of exposure to COVID-19 and other infectious diseases.

All homes are responsible for maintaining a list of visitors that is available for staff to access, which includes:

- The name and contact information of the visitor
- Time and date of the visit
- Purpose of the visit (ie: name of resident visited)

The Infection Prevention and Control Lead of the Home is accountable to ensure all lists (or logs) are maintained in the home for a minimum of thirty (30) days.

LTC home staff, students, and volunteers are not considered visitors as their access to the home is determined by the home. Infants under the age of one are also not considered visitors and are excluded from testing requirements. There are various types of visitors which are outlined below.

Education regarding physical distancing, respiratory etiquette, hand hygiene, infection prevention and control, and proper use of PPE must be provided to all visitors as indicated for the type of visit.

Screening requirements apply to all types of visitors. Visitors will be actively screened on arrival for symptoms and exposures to COVID-19, including testing as appropriate, and not be admitted for any type of visit if they do not pass the screening.

All visitors must attest that they are not experiencing any of the typical and atypical symptoms, which must be documented, via active or passive screening.

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Where a support worker requires immediate access to the home in an emergency situation, access shall be allowed following the active screening.

Homes are responsible for providing surgical/procedure masks for all indoor visits, as well as any other PPE that may be required and/or appropriate for the visit.

Masks are not required for outdoor visits. If either party is unvaccinated, physical distancing is required.

Essential visitors (refer to definition below) are the only type of visitors allowed when a resident is self-isolating, symptomatic or the home is in an outbreak.

During an outbreak, and/or suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19, the local public health unit will provide direction on visitors to the home, depending on the specific situation.

Homes are not required to supervise visits, although they do have the discretion to supervise visits in order to manage health and safety as required. If supervision of visits is required, the supervision should be implemented in a manner that respects the resident's right to communicate in confidence, receive visitors of their choice and consult in private with any person without interference.

All visitors must comply with the policies herein related to indoor and outdoor visitation.

Eating and/or drinking by the visitor is not permitted inside as masks must remain on at all times during the visit, with exception of when a resident &/or visitor are alone in the room.

Non-compliance with the Sharon Village Care Homes visitation policy could result in a discontinuation of visits for the non-compliant visitor.

## DEFINITIONS

**There are two (2) types of visitors:**

- 1. Essential Visitors**
- 2. General Visitors**

### **1. Essential visitors**

Essential visitors are defined as including a person entering the home to perform essential support services (e.g., food delivery, inspector, maintenance, or health care services (e.g., phlebotomy)) or a person visiting a very ill or palliative resident. Essential visitors include support workers and caregivers as defined in this policy.

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There are no limits on the total number of essential visitors allowed to come into a home at any given time, however there are limits (specified below) on the total number of visitors of any type per resident.

Essential visitors must be vaccinated with at least two (2) doses of approved Health Canada Covid -19 vaccine in order to enter the home.

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 is symptomatic or isolated.

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

There are 4 types of essential visitors:

- People visiting very ill or palliative residents who are receiving end-of-life care for compassionate reasons
- government inspectors with a statutory right of entry
- support workers - a type of essential visitor who is visiting to perform essential support services for the home or for a resident at the home.

Examples of support workers include physicians, nurse practitioners, maintenance workers or a person delivering food, provided they are not staff of the LTC home as defined in the *FLTCA, 2021*.

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

Caregivers must be at least 18 years of age.

A maximum of 4 caregivers may be designated per resident at a time. The designation should be made in writing to the home and will be vetted and approved by the Director of Care or designate. The decision to designate an individual as a caregiver is entirely the remit of the resident and/or their substitute decision-maker and not the home.

- A resident and/or their substitute decision-maker may change a designation in response to a change in the Resident's care needs that are reflected in the plan of care, or the availability of a designated caregiver, either temporary (e.g., illness) or permanent.

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- Examples of caregivers include family members who provide meaningful connection, a privately hired caregiver, paid companions, and translators.

## 2. General Visitors

A general visitor is a person who is not an essential visitor and is visiting either indoors or outdoors:

- a) To provide non-essential services, who may or may not be hired by the home or the resident and/or their substitute decision-maker; and/or,
- b) For social reasons (e.g., family members or friends) that the resident or their substitute decision-maker assess as different from direct care, including care related to cognitive stimulation, meaningful connection, and relational continuity.

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.

SVCH encourages all visitors to be up to date with their vaccinations, however, we do encourage unvaccinated visitors not to move freely throughout the home. It is preferred that visits occur in the resident's room and/or outside.

Groups of visitors must maintain 6 ft physical distancing between other residents/visitors.

## **PROCEDURE**

### *Access to Home:*

All general visitors, including children under the age of five, can resume visits. General visitors, with the exception of children under the age of five, will need to follow the vaccination policy of the home.

Where permitted general visitors younger than 14 years of age must be accompanied by an adult and must follow all applicable public health measures that are in place at the home (for example, active screening, physical distancing, hand hygiene, masking for source control).

All visitors, regardless of vaccination status, must pass the active screen which may include a negative rapid antigen test. If indicated, the test will be completed in the home at the screening area upon each arrival and prior to entering resident areas, and must wait outside for a minimum of 15 minutes until test results are available.

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Testing is as per the current MOH guidance documents and any updates will be communicated appropriately and will be enforced by the screener.

**Essential Visitors** are permitted as follows, subject to direction from the local public health unit:

- Any number of support workers may visit a home. Each home will assess its ability to accommodate the number of visitors based on the safety and risks of multiple visitors to one Home area.
- If the resident is self-isolating or symptomatic, a maximum of 1 caregiver per resident may visit at a time.

Where the home is in an outbreak, a maximum of 1 caregiver per resident may visit at a time.

A caregiver may not visit any other resident or home for 14 days after visiting another resident who is self-isolating or symptomatic; and/or the Home in an outbreak.

## **General Visitors**

Homes have the discretion to determine the need for visiting hours as well as where visits from general visitors may be held (e.g., dedicated outdoor area, inside the resident's room, specified indoor area, etc.). In determining the times and location of visits, homes should consider the staffing capacity for transferring residents into and out of the visiting location, and escorting general visitors to the visiting location as well as the space available in the location for physical distancing.

In summary, all visitors to the Home are required to:

- **Follow public health measures during the course of the visit which may include:** active screening, including testing, physical distancing, hand hygiene, masking for source control, remaining in one area/room during the visit etc.
- **Share their vaccination status** and if unable to or unwilling to share this information may be subject to additional testing or screening to safely enter the home.
- **Follow the homes abuse policy & bullying and harassment policies and any other related policies regarding** maintaining and promoting respect and dignity of persons served, staff, volunteers, students, and other contracted service providers in the home.
- **Write in the Home's log book** the date of visit, time of entry, and time of exit.

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## Non-adherence by Visitors:

The home shall

- Provide education and 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 are proportionate to the severity of the non-adherence
- Homes are encouraged to consult the Residents' Council and the Family Council in the home on procedures for addressing non-adherence by visitors.
- Where the home has previously ended a visit by, or temporarily prohibited a visitor, 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.

Homes have 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.)
- The visitor has been given sufficient time to adhere to the requirement(s).

The home shall document where they have ended a visit due to non-adherence.

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, homes should 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 instruction in Directive #3 and guidance 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.

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- 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.)
- Must 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

Any employee having a concern about a visitor or Essential Caregiver must report it directly to their immediate Supervisor for further investigation and follow-up with the Director of Care and Executive Director

## **Education:**

All visitors will be provided education, either verbally or in form of written materials on all requirements.

- Essential Visitors: The home shall provide and document training to caregivers that address how to safely provide direct care, including putting on and taking off required PPE, and hand hygiene prior to visiting any resident for the first time following this policy coming into effect.
- At least once every month thereafter, the home should ask caregivers to verbally attest to the home that they have read/re-read the home's visitor policy.
- General Visitors: Homes shall ask general visitors to verbally attest to the home that they have read/re-read the home's visitor policy prior to visiting any resident for the first time following this policy coming into effect and monthly thereafter. Homes shall document that this attestation has occurred.

## **OUTCOME**



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- Visitation to SVCH homes occur while continuing to protect the health and safety of residents, staff and visitors, as well as supporting residents in receiving the care they need and maintaining their social connections and emotional well-being.
- The Visitation Policy will clearly outline variations for visiting requirements during an infectious disease outbreak, an epidemic, and/or a pandemic.
- The Visitation Policy will promote the rights of the person served to have continued support through visitation which supports the importance of the persons-served physical, mental, social, and emotional well-being and quality of life and that support from visitors will continue during non-outbreak and confirmed outbreaks within the Home.
- Is made accessible through posting within the Home and on the SVCH website,
- The Visitation Policy promotes the rights of the person-served to have family, friends and others present 24/7 at the end-of life.