

# COVID-19 UPDATES

## Essential Caregiver Visitors and General Visitors

### County of Elgin Long-Term Care Homes

To: Families, Substitute Decision-Makers of County of Elgin Long-Term Care Homes

From: Michele Harris, Director of Homes and Seniors Services

Date: **May 7, 2021**

Subject: COVID-19 Updates – Essential Caregiver Visitors and General Visitors

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Dear Families and substitute decision makers,

While the Infection Prevention and Control measures in Long-Term Care Homes (LTCHs) of masking, protective eyewear, physical distancing, resident and staff cohorting, visitor policy, and immunization have been highly effective in minimizing transmission of COVID-19, the Ministry of Long-Term Care (MLTC) has heard from families, residents, and staff that there are opportunities to provide additional emotional support to residents and families within the current COVID-19 long-term care home experience.

On May 4, 2021, the Ministry of Long-Term Care, provided information to Long-Term Care Homes regarding updates to Directive #3 and the new Ministry of Long-Term Care COVID-19 Guidance Document for LTCH's in Ontario, to be implemented as soon as feasible.

The County of Elgin Homes have been working to review the updated documents and to develop strategies to safely and effectively implement the changes that help respond to the mental, emotional and social needs of residents and their caregivers.

Many of the recent changes as outlined below are based on the overall immunization rates in the Home. Throughout this communication you will note the term “fully immunized” and it is important that all persons have an understanding of this term.

#### **What is meant by “fully immunized”?**

“**Fully Immunized**” means a person has received the total number of required doses of COVID-19 vaccine approved by Health Canada and it has been at least 14 days since they received their final dose.

#### **Effective Immediately:**

- Essential Caregiver visitors are asked to continue with the Rapid Antigen testing performed on site at the Home they are visiting.
- A reminder that general visitors (anyone other than an Essential Caregiver) are currently only permitted to visit when a Public Health geography is in the “Green” zone
- Screening of staff and Essential Caregivers will be conducted upon **entry** to the Home. Screening is no longer required when leaving the Home.



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- Essential Caregivers will be asked to show proof of their immunization status upon entry to the Home. **“Fully immunized”** persons will be provided with a button for the duration of their visit to ensure clear communication to the team regarding full immunization and support the enhanced visiting opportunities available to those visitors/residents.
- Close physical contact (e.g. hand holding, hugs) is now permitted between a “fully immunized” resident and a “fully immunized” essential caregiver provided that appropriate infection prevention and control measures are in place including masking, eye protection and hand hygiene.
- Updates to inside and outside visits for residents and essential caregivers:
  - A reminder that general visitors are not currently permitted
  - Each Home is working to designate indoor and outdoor visit areas for residents and essential caregivers
  - Each designated visiting area has a maximum occupancy. If an area is unavailable during your visit, please seek an alternate designated area or visit in your loved one’s room
  - Masking, physical distancing, eye protection, hand hygiene, and respiratory (cough) etiquette public health measures must be followed during all visits - indoor and outdoor
  - Please speak with a manager or registered nursing staff member for information regarding designated visiting locations

#### **Effective Beginning Monday, May 10, 2021**

- “Fully immunized” residents may enjoy a pre-scheduled meal with their “fully immunized” essential caregiver visitor in an area separate from other residents and visitors. Masks may be removed while eating and drinking and must be replaced as soon as the meal is complete. Please speak with a manager to book a time and location for your pre-scheduled meal.
- Absences may resume provided the following measures are in place:
  - The absence meets the criteria “type” outlined below
  - The absence is requested at least 24 hours in advance of the scheduled/pre-arranged absence – requests may be submitted beginning Monday, May 10, 2021
  - An assessment must be completed by the manager/registered staff prior to the absence
  - The resident (if capable) and/or substitute decision maker agrees to the absence
  - The resident and essential caregiver pass the screening prior to the absence
  - The essential caregiver passes the rapid antigen testing prior to the absence
  - The resident is provided with a medical mask and instructed on use
  - The resident and essential caregiver is reminded, instructed on, and follows, public health measures including physical distancing, hand hygiene, mask etiquette, respiratory etiquette, etc. when out of the home
  - Upon return to the Home, the resident must be actively screened for symptoms and exposures



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- Absence types currently permitted during the stay-at-home order include:
  - Medical absences
  - Compassionate and palliative absences
  - Short term absences, specifically essential absences including for reasons of groceries, pharmacies and outdoor physical activity (i.e. exercise)
  - **Social outings and overnight absences are not currently permitted** under the province-wide-stay-at-home order

Additional enhanced opportunities (communal dining, indoor organized small group events) will be available when our Homes meet the required 85% resident and 70 % employee immunization coverage rate. In these instances, physical distancing can be suspended in cohorted groups for the duration of the dining period and small group activities.

Although immunization is available to all residents, staff and essential caregivers at the County of Elgin Homes, we have not yet met the targeted coverage rate. If you are an essential caregiver visitor and require information regarding immunization, please speak to a manager for information. One of the challenges in meeting the targeted coverage rates is the current timeframe between first and second dose(s) of vaccine. We will provide communication as each of our Homes meets the targeted coverage rates.

It is expected that there will continue to be changes to the visitor and absence requirements and process during the course of the pandemic, and the Homes shall communicate changes through one or more of the following avenues:

- County of Elgin Homes website
- Weekly newspaper Ads – Aylmer Express, West Elgin Chronicle
- Email communications to family members from Manager of Program and Therapy – if you wish to be added to the email communications, please email [tnoble@elgin.ca](mailto:tnoble@elgin.ca)
- Electronic message board at the entrance to the Home(s)
- Monthly newsletter inserted in the monthly billing
- Visitor attendant and/or health professional conducting the testing

If you have any questions regarding visiting, absences and infection prevention and control measures please feel free to speak to a manager of the Home.

Sincerely,

Michele Harris, Director of Homes and Seniors Services



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