

## GOOD SAMARITAN SENIORS COMPLEX POLICY AND PROCEDURE

<b>Manual: INFECTION PREVENTION and CONTROL</b>	<b>Subject: ESSENTIAL VISITORS DURING the COVID-19 PANDEMIC</b>
<b>Section: G</b>	<b>Effective Date: JUNE 2022</b>
<b>Approved By: Deirdre Britton</b>	<b>Supersede: April 2020, June 2020, September 2020, October 2020, November 2020, December 2020, July 2021, November 2021, December 2021, March 2022, May 2022</b>

### PREAMBLE

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the health and safety of our Residents, families, staff, and visitors remains our top priority. The presence of family and friends is an important source of mental and emotional strength for our Residents during this challenging time. The following policy provides direction related to “essential visitors”.

### POLICY

In accordance with the most current of the following as appropriate,

- Minister’s Directive: COVID-19 response measures for long-term care homes,
- Covid-19 Guidance Document for Long Term Care Homes in Ontario,
- Retirement Homes Policy to Implement Directive #3

Good Samaritan Seniors’ Complex (GSSC) shall permit “essential visitors” into the Home/Lodge during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### PURPOSE

The requirements set out in this policy are to ensure the safety of all Residents, staff and visitors, and allow for the continuity of essential visits that support the mental, physical and spiritual needs of Residents for their quality of life. Any non-compliance with the rules set out in this policy will be the basis for discontinuation of an essential visit.

### Guiding 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 mental and 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

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- **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 consider 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

This policy is based on the above principles. It is with compassion that we recognize the need for Residents' connection with loved ones. We will take all reasonable steps to help facilitate these visits within the parameters of ministry directives.

Good Samaritan Seniors' Complex also recognizes the concepts of non-maleficence (i.e., not doing harm), proportionality (i.e., to the level of risk), transparency and reciprocity (i.e., providing resources to those who are disadvantaged by the policy). These concepts will inform decision making with regards to the scheduling and/or refusal of essential visitors as appropriate.

### PROCEDURE

Essential visitors are persons visiting the Home/Lodge to meet an essential need related to the operations of the Home/Lodge or of a Resident(s) that could not be adequately met if the person does not visit the Home/Lodge. There are no limits on the number of essential visitors allowed to come into the Home/Lodge at any given time.

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

There are four types of essential visitors:

- **people visiting very ill or palliative Residents** who are receiving end-of-life care for compassionate reasons, hospice services, etc.
- **government inspectors with a statutory right of entry.** Government inspectors who have a statutory right to enter long-term care homes (and/or Retirement Homes) to carry out their duties must be granted access to a home. Examples of government inspectors

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include inspectors under the *Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007*, the *Health Protection and Promotion Act*, the *Electricity Act, 1998*, the *Technical Standards and Safety Act, 2000*, the *Retirement Homes Act*, and the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*.

- **support workers:** support workers are persons who visit a home to provide support to the critical operations of the home or to provide essential services to Residents.  
*Essential services provided by support workers include but are not limited to:*
  - assessment, diagnostic, intervention or rehabilitation and counselling services for Residents by regulated health professionals such as physicians and nurse practitioners
  - Assistive Devices Program vendors – for example, home oxygen therapy
  - moving a Resident in or out of a home
  - social work services, legal services
  - post-mortem services
  - emergency services (for example, such as those provided by first responders)
  - maintenance services such as those required to ensure the structural integrity of the home and the functionality of the home’s HVAC mechanical, electrical, plumbing systems and services related to exterior grounds and winter property maintenance
  - food or nutrition and water or drink delivery
  - Canada Post mail services and other courier services
  - election officials or workers
  
- **caregivers:** A caregiver is a type of essential visitor who is visiting the home to provide direct care to meet the essential needs of a particular Resident. Caregivers must be at least 16 years of age and must be designated by the Resident or his or her substitute decision-maker. Direct care includes providing support or assistance to a Resident that includes providing direct physical support (for example, eating, bathing and dressing) or providing social and emotional support.
  - examples of direct care provided by caregivers include but are not limited to the following:
    - supporting activities of daily living such as bathing, dressing and eating assistance
    - providing cognitive stimulation
    - fostering successful communication

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- providing meaningful connection and emotional support
- offering relational continuity assistance in decision-making
- examples of caregivers include:
  - friends and family members who provide meaningful connection
  - a privately hired caregiver
  - paid companions
  - translator

Designations are to be made in writing and kept on file; designated caregivers may be a family member, privately hired caregiver, paid companion, translator etc. An important role of the caregiver is that of providing meaningful connection and emotional support. A person will not be excluded from being a caregiver if they are unable to provide direct physical support.

Scheduling of visits is not required for designated caregivers, and there is no limit to length or frequency of visits by a caregiver; the number of caregivers allowed to be with and/or designated by a Resident at any given time is subject to change based on provincial, municipal, local, or home/lodge specific directives.

### **Infection Prevention and Control Precautions:**

- When performing work in the Home/Lodge, the essential visitor must wear a medical mask; GSSC shall provide where necessary;
  - When providing direct care to a Resident who is suspect or confirmed with COVID-19, and/or when the Home/Lodge is in outbreak, the essential visitor must wear full PPE (fit tested N95 mask where possible or medical mask, gown, gloves, eye protection); GSSC shall provide where necessary.

### **Screening Protocols & Visitor Requirements**

- Essential visitors will be provided with education that includes the following:
  - PPE application and removal;
  - Hand Hygiene; and
  - Visitation policies where applicable.
- Essential visitors shall be screened and tested (in accordance with policy) prior to visiting and shall only be permitted to visit if they pass the screening/testing;

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- **Essential Visitors must:**
  - Complete hand hygiene and don a medical mask before being screened for the visit;
  - Be screened by the Home/Lodge regarding testing, exposure, and symptoms.
  - Multiple essential visitors may be permitted in to the Home/Lodge for the purposes of services not related to one specific Resident;
- Up to 4 essential visitors are permitted to visit with a Resident at any given time;
  - In the event the Resident is self-isolating or symptomatic, or the Home/Lodge is in outbreak, only 1 essential visitor is permitted to visit with the Resident at any given time.
    - If the above is the case, the essential visitor CANNOT visit any other Resident or Home/Lodge for 14 days.
- In the event other essential visitors are waiting to visit a Resident, visits may be limited;
- No food or beverages are to be consumed by the essential visitor(s) during the visit as masks must remain in place covering the nose and mouth at all times;
- Physical contact is permitted between “up to date” vaccinated essential visitors and Residents; however,
  - Physical contact must be kept to a minimum and be restricted to necessary contact for the delivery of the service being provided when the essential visitor and/or Resident is NOT “up to date” with vaccination;
    - Fully immunized essential visitors may join Residents during dining and activities both indoors and outdoors, unless otherwise directed by the local public health unit; essential visitors who are not “up to date” are not permitted to attend the dining room/activities with others.
- Briefs hugs are permitted to take place between essential visitors and Residents regardless of vaccination status;
- All essential visitors must adhere to respiratory etiquette, hand hygiene, and follow GSSC infection prevention and control policies and procedures (IPAC);
  - Staff may monitor visits to ensure policies and procedures are followed; in the event they are not adhered to, the essential visitor may be asked to leave the premises.

N.B. where an **essential visitor** requires immediate access to the Home/Lodge in an emergency situation, the Home/Lodge does not need to ask for proof of or verbal attestation to a negative COVID-19 test result.

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### EDUCATION

Physical Distancing: [handout](#)

<https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/factsheet/factsheet-covid-19-guide-physical-distancing.pdf?la=en#:~:text=Physical%20distancing%20means%20keeping%20our,limiting%20activities%20outside%20the%20home.&text=When%20outside%20your%20home%2C%20it,from%20other%20people%20whenever%20possible.&text=Work%20from%20home%2C%20if%20possible.>

Respiratory Etiquette: [handout](#)

<https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/c/2013/clincial-office-cough-signage.pdf?la=en>

Hand Hygiene: [handout](#)

<https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/j/2011/jcyh-brochure-Residents-visitors.pdf?la=en>

IPAC: [handout](#)

<https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/r/2012/rpap-factsheet.pdf?la=en>

PPE: [handout](#)

<https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/r/2012/rpap-recommended-ppe-steps.pdf?la=en>

### RELATED HOME/LODGE POLICIES

- General Visitors During the Covid-19 Pandemic
- Managing Residents and Staff During the Covid-19 Pandemic
- Covid-19 Virus Testing During the Covid-19 Pandemic Non-Residents
- Covid19 Vaccination

### REFERENCES

- COVID-19 Guidance Document for Long Term Care Homes in Ontario
  - <https://www.ontario.ca/page/covid-19-guidance-document-long-term-care-homes-ontario>
- Minister's Directive: COVID-19 response measures for long-term care homes
  - <https://www.ontario.ca/page/ministers-directive-covid-19-response-measures-for-long-term-care-homes>