

## Frequently Asked Questions: Indoor Visits, Expanded Outdoor Visits, Social Gatherings and Hair Salon Services in Long Term Care Facilities

As of July 17, 2020

We know that COVID-19 has been particularly difficult on those who live and work in long-term care, as well as their loved ones. Restrictions were put in place to protect some of our most vulnerable, but we know they have taken a toll. With safety as our top priority, it's time to bring some normalcy back into the lives of those living in long-term care.

On July 22, 2020, Long-Term Care (LTC) facilities in Nova Scotia will begin to allow:

1. indoor visitation for residents and their families
2. the number of outdoor visitors has been increased to five (5) at one time
3. hair salons in long term care can open for long term care residents only
4. and socialization in groups can begin for long term care residents

As these clients are more susceptible to suffering COVID19-related complications due to increased frailty and high prevalence of underlying chronic health conditions, it is important to make sure these visitations are conducted in a way that keeps residents safe.

Please refer to the Resident Visitation: A Guideline for Long-Term Care Homes in Nova Scotia (July 16) for additional information.

### OVERVIEW

#### What is changing?

We're revising the provincial directive to the long-term care sector to ease some of the restrictions that have been in place during the pandemic.

#### *Outdoor visits*

- allow up to five visitors per resident (up from two)
- everyone must wear a mask (medical for residents, non-medical for visitors)
- everyone must practice physical distancing, except for brief contact like a hug

#### *Indoor visits*

- residents or substitute decision makers can designate up to three people as visitors; only one may visit at a time
- everyone must wear a medical mask
- everyone must practice physical distancing, except for brief contact like a hug
- visits must be pre-scheduled with the facility
- facilities must designate a location for the visit, ideally near an entrance
- staff must escort visitors to and from the visit, and monitor the visit
- visitors must be screened by the facility and they must practice proper hygiene
- the area must be cleaned before and after each visit

### **Licensed hair salons**

- licensed hair salons that operate within a long-term care home may reopen to residents only
- the salon must follow the guidelines set by the Cosmetology Association of Nova Scotia and submit a safety plan to the facility within which it is located
- a list of every resident who visited the salon, and when, must be maintained

### **Off-site bus trips**

- facilities will be permitted to resume off-site bus trips for groups of up to 10 people (including residents, staff and driver)
- the trips must be for sightseeing only; residents and staff cannot disembark the bus
- bus drivers must be screened using the same protocols as visitors to a facility and contact between the driver and residents/staff should be limited
- the bus must be cleaned before and after use
- facilities are expected to group the same residents together each time and maintain consistent staff, where possible

In all situations above, no one exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 may participate. Anyone experiencing symptoms should not visit a long-term care home (or any public space) and should contact 811 to arrange testing.

### **Why now?**

Very early in the pandemic, we implemented the first restrictions on visitors to long-term care homes. On March 15, all visitation was stopped. This was done to protect the physical health of residents, but we know it's had a toll on their mental and social well-being. With new cases remaining low, it is the appropriate time to bring some normalcy back into the lives of long-term care residents.

### **Is it safe?**

We are easing, not eliminating, restrictions. Visitors will be required to wear masks and make their visits under certain conditions, including scheduling visits, and continuing to limit how many can attend, and wearing masks. Everyone must practice physical distancing and good hand hygiene. Residents need more social interaction, and this will help.

### **Indoor visits seem to pose more risk. Why not stick with outdoor visits?**

Not every resident can go outdoors. Indoor visits will be done with strict rules in place, including: up to three people designated for these visits and one at a time, visitors must be screened, homes must designate a location in the facility, everyone must wear a medical mask and practice physical distancing (except for a brief hug) and good hand hygiene, visits must be pre-scheduled, staff must escort visitors to and from the visit and remain in the room, and the space must be cleaned before and after each visit.

**Will volunteers be permitted back into facilities?**

Not at this time.

**Do we have to implement these changes?**

No. It is at the discretion of each facility whether they'll implement these changes. To accommodate some of these changes safely, appropriate space both indoors and outdoors is required. While we encourage each facility to do what they can, we recognize some may have limitations. Those who want more time to plan can implement any of these changes on a future date, as long as the directive remains unchanged.

**Does this apply to Department of Community Services facilities?**

Adult Residential Centres and Regional Rehabilitation Centres licensed by the Department of Community Services will also implement indoor visits under the same guidelines.

## OUTDOOR VISITS AT LONG TERM CARE FACILITIES

### GENERAL

#### **What is new with outdoor visits?**

The number of visitors that are allowed for outdoor visits has been increased to five.

#### **When will the change take effect? What if we are not ready to implement?**

The change from one (1) outdoor visitor to five (5) outdoor visitors per resident at one time will be effective July 22, 2020. It will be up to each facility to determine when it is ready to implement the change. Facilities are responsible for communicating visit logistics and scheduling details to families.

#### **What if visitors have travelled?**

If residents or Substitute Decision Makers (SDMs) identify visitors who have travelled outside of the Atlantic Provinces, visitors MUST self-isolate for 14 days prior to visiting a resident in a long-term care facility.

#### **If residents are not able to make it outside for a visit, what option do they have?**

If residents are not able to leave the facility, consider prioritizing those residents for an indoor visit. If residents are unable to leave their room, we suggest that they continue to make use of virtual visits using the facility iPads.

#### **Are we required to screen visitors prior to the visit?**

Yes. When scheduling a visitation, staff must screen the potential visitor via phone for signs and symptoms of COVID-19. Visitors are not permitted to enter the facility or grounds if they are under a requirement to self-isolate (due to travel, waiting for results of COVID-19 testing, due to contact with a COVID-19 case, are currently ill with COVID-19, or for other reasons). Visitors must be screened for COVID-19 upon entry. They must be asymptomatic, must wear a non-medical mask, and must maintain physical distancing of two (2) meters.

#### **Are families allowed to enter the facility for the screening that will take place before their visit?**

We understand that facilities may need to have a check-in area within the facility and/or visitors may need to walk through the facility to reach a designated outdoor space. Efforts should be made to maintain physical distancing while this occurs. Facility staff must minimize any potential crowding while visitors are arriving and departing.

#### **Are children permitted to attend visits?**

Yes, there are no restrictions on children visiting residents. We know that children sometimes have difficulty adhering to physical distancing rules, so LTC staff should monitor visitation areas to ensure distancing requirements are being met. Should facilities feel they are operationally unable to accommodate children, a facility should communicate to families that this is a part of their facility-specific protocol.

**Is there a length of time for the visits?**

There is no recommended length of time. We encourage each facility to develop its own guidelines. When developing schedules, consideration should be given to the number of families requesting a visit and the number of residents that would like a visit, factoring in the time needed for environmental cleaning between visitors. Priority should be given to initial visits before scheduling second visits for families and residents.

**Is there a visitation process that we must follow?**

All visits must be scheduled and follow the COVID-19 Management in LTCF Directive and guidelines. In addition, there are supports that have been developed by the Department of Health and Wellness for communication purposes. Facilities can also choose to develop their own process that reflects their facility's unique needs while adhering to direction provided.

**How many residents can have visitors at the same time?**

Facilities can determine the appropriate number of residents who can have visitors at the same time. This will depend on the size of the outdoor visitation area and the number of staff available to manage and monitor the visitations, while adhering to public health guidelines.

**If a resident requires assistance during the visit, does this impact the number of visitors allowed?**

The maximum number of outdoor visitors is five (5) per resident, however there is no maximum number of staff who can attend during the visit, as more than one staff may need to assist the resident.

**Why do I need to log so much information?**

Visitor information must be logged, including contact information of the visitor, date and time of attendance at the facility. This information should be maintained for a minimum of six (6) weeks from the date of the visit. A daily log of staff members who assisted with the visits should also be maintained. In the event there is a case of COVID-19 at the home, this information is required to support Public Health contact tracing.

**Do we need staff to monitor all visits?**

Yes. Visits are to be monitored by staff who will accompany visitors directly to the identified visiting space and who will monitor the outdoor visitation area. In some case, staff may also need to accompany residents during the entire visit, if they require assistance.

**What if a resident or staff member in the facility shows signs or symptoms of COVID-19? Do we suspend visits?**

Yes. Immediately follow the directions in Section 3 of the COVID-19 Management in LTCF document.

**What about visitors who may become ill after the visit?**

Staff must advise visitors that should they become ill in the two (2) weeks following their visit to the facility, they must contact 811 for screening and testing. Should the visitor test positive for

COVID-19, the visitor must inform Public Health during their investigation that s/he has visited the facility.

**Are we able to use volunteers to support the visits?**

Volunteers are not considered essential staff in LTC are therefore not permitted on site at this time. Long term care assistants may be used to support visits.

Facilities can use volunteers to support the scheduling of visitor appointment as long as they are not on the premises.

**PHYSICAL DISTANCING**

**It has been three (3) months since families have seen their loved one. Is a hug or hand holding permitted?**

While it is expected that all visitors practice physical distancing for the majority of their visit, visits will allow for limited physical contact while masked (e.g. a quick hug, shaking hands with appropriate hand hygiene measures, etc.). The visitors and resident must be wearing masks throughout the visit (medical grade for residents, non-medical grade for visitors). Outside of this brief physical contact, it is expected that physical distancing will be maintained. Proper hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette must be maintained prior to, during, and after contact.

**MASKS AND PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)**

**Do visitors need to wear masks during the visits? What about children?**

Yes, visitors must wear a non-medical mask (cloth and homemade masks are allowed) to the designated area, during the visit and when exiting the visiting area. Children under 2 years of age are not required to wear a mask, however, must maintain physical distancing.

Public Health has advised that once a visitor is at the designated outdoor visit area, if physical distancing can be maintained, the non-medical mask may be safely removed. However, due to a number of factors dependent on individual facilities, staff, visitors and residents, the safety of this must be determined at the facility level. This can be done on a visit by visit basis, or through a facility-specific protocol on mask removal.

**If a visitor arrives without a mask, do we turn them away or should we provide them a mask from the facility supply?**

It is important to stress to families the significance of wearing a mask during a scheduled visit with a resident. If a visitor arrives without a mask, the facility can provide a mask from its own PPE stock, or reschedule the appointment when the visitor has a mask.

**Why are you recommending non-medical masks vs. medical masks?**

When worn properly, non-medical masks can reduce the risk of transmitting the virus in the same way that following cough and sneeze etiquette can protect others. Facilities may wish to

develop their own facility-specific masking protocol to require medical masks, however this PPE supply will not be supported through the department.

**Do visitors need to wear a mask if it is negatively impacting communication between resident and their family?**

Once at the designated outdoor visiting area, the non-medical mask may be removed at the discretion of the LTC facility if physical distancing can be maintained and if the mask presents a barrier to effective communication between resident and visitor.

**Is full Personal Protective Equipment required by visitors during visits?**

No. Outdoor visitation will be available only to residents who are not required to self-isolate and who are not demonstrating signs or symptoms of COVID-19.

**DESIGNATED VISITATION AREA**

**Where can visits occur?**

Visits should occur in designated areas on the grounds of the facility.

**Should there be physical markers outside to assist with maintaining physical distancing?**

Yes, we suggest that physical markers be used in the outdoor space to help visitors respect public health distancing guidelines. Put signs up around the facility, focusing on key areas where you will be accepting visitors when they arrive.

**I don't have an outdoor shelter at my facility, can I schedule visits in poor weather conditions?**

DHW is providing support to facilities for outdoor shelters. Details have been previously communicated.

**What should be available at the outdoor visitation site?**

Chairs should be available for visitors and placed far enough apart to maintain social distancing from other families. Cleaning of chairs and other surfaces (if applicable) between family visits is required. Hand sanitizer, paper towels and garbage cans for disposal of soiled items should be provided and readily available. Remind visitors to clean hands prior to and after the visit. Staff should also cleanse the hands of residents after the visit is complete and before going inside.

## INDOOR VISITS AT LONG TERM CARE FACILITIES

### GENERAL

#### **How many visitors are allowed at a time for indoor visits?**

Only one (1) visitor, per resident, can be present indoors in the facility at a time.

#### **Can two members of the same household visit at the same time?**

Even if visitors are from the same family, only one visitor per resident can be present indoors at one time.

#### **When will the change take effect? What if we are not ready to implement?**

These changes will be effective on July 22, 2020. It will be up to each facility to determine when it is ready to implement the change. Facilities are responsible for communicating visit logistics and scheduling details to families.

#### **What if visitors have travelled?**

If residents or Substitute Decision Makers (SDMs) identify visitors who have travelled outside of the Atlantic Provinces, those visitors MUST self-isolate for 14 days prior to visiting a resident in a long-term care facility.

#### **What protocols are required?**

Section 2.3 of the COVID-19 Management in Long Term Care Facility Directive provides the minimum Public Health measures that must be implemented. Visits are to occur in a designated location in the facility. Visits will allow for limited physical contact while masked (e.g. a quick hug, shaking hands with appropriate hand hygiene measures, etc.). The visitor and resident must both be wearing medical masks throughout the visit. Outside of this brief physical contact, it is expected that physical distancing will be maintained and adhere to public health measures and/or facility protocols. Facilities may choose to implement measures over and above the minimum requirements that meet resident, family and facility needs.

#### **Are we required to screen visitors prior to the visit?**

Yes. When scheduling a visit, staff must screen the potential visitor via phone for signs and symptoms of COVID-19. Visitors are not permitted to enter the facility or grounds if they are under a requirement to self-isolate (due to travel, waiting for results of COVID-19 testing, due to contact with a COVID-19 case, are currently ill with COVID-19, or for other reasons). Visitors must be screened for COVID-19 upon entry. They must be asymptomatic, must wear a medical mask, and must maintain physical distancing of two (2) meters.

#### **How will visitor practices be established?**

The guideline document will be helpful in defining visitor practices for each facility. Facility operators must communicate with residents, their families, and visitors about the current Public Health measures in the home and will ensure they are aware of the individual and

collective risks associated with visitation. Facilities will conduct monthly reviews of their visitation practices.

**Can someone who was not identified by the resident or SDM as a visitor be allowed to visit with residents?**

Residents can identify up to three designated visitors for indoor visits. Anyone not identified in this list is not permitted to participate in indoor visits.

**How do we handle people showing up for visits that are not scheduled or who are not on the list?**

Each facility must develop processes to schedule indoor visits. Facility operators must talk with residents, their families, and visitors about their processes. Only one visitor may visit with a resident at one time. If an identified visitor is not able to attend a visit, facilities are encouraged to identify processes to determine if, and in what circumstances, substitutions from the three identified visitors can be permitted.

**Can a family member assist with feeding their loved one and/or personal care?**

At this time, only social visits are permitted. Family members or other visitors identified by the resident are not able to participate in care-related activities.

**What happens if there is an outbreak at a facility?**

Visitors will only be allowed if there is not an active COVID-19 outbreak in the facility/residence. Indoor visits will stop immediately if an outbreak is declared by Public Health. Visits will resume when the outbreak is declared over by Public Health. Should an outbreak be suspected in a facility, indoor visits will be suspended while testing occurs.

**Are we required to screen visitors prior to the visit?**

Yes. Visitors must be screened for COVID-19 upon entry. Visitors are not permitted to enter the facility if they are under a requirement to self-isolate (due to travel, awaiting results of COVID-19 testing, due to contact with a COVID-19 case, are currently ill with COVID-19, or for other reasons). They must be asymptomatic, must wear a medical mask for indoor visits, and must maintain physical distancing of two (2) meters.

**Are children permitted to attend indoor visits?**

A child can make indoor visits if the child has been identified by the resident or the resident's Substitute Decision Maker. If it is determined that the child does not need to be supervised by a guardian, they can enter the facility and participate under the same rules as an adult visitor. Any other rules already defined by the facility regarding visitors under the age of majority continue to apply. These rules may differ from facility to facility and should be clearly communicated.

**Is there a length of time for the visits?**

There is not a maximum recommended length of time, however it is recommended that visits are at least 30 minutes in duration. We encourage each facility to develop its own guidelines for

the length of visits. This may vary by facility based on space available for visits and other considerations. When developing schedules, consideration should be given to the number of families and residents requesting visits, factoring in the time required for environmental cleaning between visitors. Priority should be given to those who have not had an outdoor visit before scheduling second visits for families and residents.

**Is there a visitation process that we must follow?**

All visits must be scheduled and follow the facility procedures and Public Health measures. Department of Health and Wellness has provided supports for communication purposes in the visitation guidance document. Facilities can also choose to develop their own process that reflects their unique needs, as long as they adhere to the COVID-19 Management in Long Term Care Facilities Directive.

**If a resident requires assistance during the indoor visit, does this impact the number of visitors allowed?**

One visitor per resident can visit at a time. There is no maximum number of staff who can attend during the visit, as more than one staff may need to assist the resident.

**Why do I need to log so much information?**

In the event there is a case of COVID-19 at the home, this information is required to support Public Health contact tracing. Visitor information must be logged, including date and time of attendance at the facility. This information should be maintained for a minimum of six (6) weeks from the date of the visit. A daily log of staff members who assisted with the visits should also be maintained.

**If a patient/client needs to be brought to their room for personal care (toileting etc.), can the family member remain on site and the visit resume?**

Time limits will be determined by each facility, and a decision to extend a visit should include consideration of availability of staff to monitor, availability of the visitation area, timing of next scheduled visit and cleaning time required between visits. Designated visitors must remain in the designated visit site for the duration of the visit time.

**Do we need staff to monitor visits?**

Yes. Visits must be monitored by staff who will accompany visitors directly to the identified visiting space. Staff will support residents during the entire visit.

**What if a resident or staff member in the facility shows signs or symptoms of COVID-19? Do we suspend visits?**

Yes. Immediately follow the directions in Section 3 of the COVID-19 Management in LTCF document.

### **What about visitors who may become ill after the visit?**

Staff must advise to visitors that if they become ill in the two (2) weeks following their visit to the facility, they must contact 811 for screening and testing. Should the visitor test positive for COVID-19, the visitor must inform Public Health during their investigation that s/he has visited the facility.

## **PHYSICAL DISTANCING**

### **Is a hug or hand holding permitted?**

While it is expected that all visitors practice physical distancing for the majority of their visit, visits will allow for limited physical contact while masked (e.g. a quick hug, shaking hands with appropriate hand hygiene measures, etc.). The visitors and resident must be wearing masks throughout the visit. Outside of this brief physical contact, it is expected that physical distancing will be maintained. Proper hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette must be maintained prior to, during, and after contact.

## **MASKS AND PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)**

### **Do indoor visitors need to wear masks during the visits?**

Visitors must be provided with and wear a medical mask.

### **Do visitors need to wear a mask if it is negatively impacting communication between resident and their family?**

Yes, the medical mask must remain on during the visit. If this negatively impacts communications, it may be more appropriate to schedule an outdoor visit.

### **Is full Personal Protective Equipment required by visitors during visits?**

No. Visitation will be available only to residents who are not required to self isolate and who are not demonstrating signs or symptoms of COVID-19.

### **What cleaning protocols are required?**

Environmental cleaning of high touch surfaces and where the visitor was sitting/touching should occur at the end of each visit.

## **DESIGNATED VISITATION AREA**

### **Where can visits occur?**

Visits can only occur in designated areas of the facility. It is up to each facility to determine the best location for indoor visits. It is recommended that indoor visits occur in an area that minimizes the distance the visitor needs to travel within the facility. In some cases, this may be in the resident room.

**Should there be physical markers in the facility to assist with maintain physical distancing?**

Yes, we suggest that physical markers/visual cues be used wherever possible to help visitors adhere to physical distancing.

**What should be available at the indoor visitation site?**

Chairs should be available for visitors and placed far enough apart to maintain physical distancing between individuals. Cleaning of chairs and surfaces (if applicable) between visits is required. Hand sanitizer and garbage cans for disposal of soiled items should be provided and readily available. Remind visitors to clean hands prior to and after the visit and to maintain respiratory etiquette. Staff should also cleanse the hands of residents after the visit is complete.

## **SOCIAL GATHERINGS IN LONG TERM CARE FACILITIES**

### **How many residents can gather together at a time?**

On site gatherings of up to 10 people (including residents and staff) will be permitted. Gatherings could be for the purposes of group dining, gathering for recreation activities and for socialization. Facilities are expected to group the same residents together each time and maintain consistent programming staff where possible.

### **Are outside visitors able to attend indoor gatherings?**

No. At this time, visitors are not permitted to attend or participate in indoor activities/gatherings.

### **When will the change take effect? What if we are not ready to implement?**

These changes will be effective on July 22, 2020. It will be up to each facility to determine when it is ready to support limited gatherings.

### **Where can gatherings occur?**

Each facility will need to determine the best space for these gatherings to occur. This may include the dining room, recreation areas or other multi-purposes spaces in facilities.

### **What cleaning protocols are required?**

Cleaning, hand hygiene and other protocols will be implemented before and after gatherings. Environmental cleaning of high touch surfaces and where the residents were sitting or areas they touched should occur at the end of each gathering.

## HAIR SALONS IN LONG TERM CARE FACILITIES

### **How will facilities ensure hairdressing visits are safe?**

All licensed service providers must follow the industry guidelines and protocols set out by the Cosmetology Association of Nova Scotia for personal services. These guidelines can be accessed at [Cosmetology Association of Nova Scotia](#) website.

Licensed hairdressers wishing to provide hairdressing services onsite in LTC facilities must develop and submit safety plans to the facility. The facility operator will review safety plans for feasibility, and if approved, will work to determine a start date for services.

### **When will the change take effect? What if we are not ready to implement?**

These changes will be effective on July 22, 2020. It will be up to each facility with a salon to work with the operator to determine a start date.

### **Are hair salons in long-term care facilities open to the public or only to long-term care residents?**

Hair salons in long-term care facilities are only open to residents of the facility at this time.

### **Is a mask required in the salon?**

All salon staff are required to provide and wear a mask (type determined by industry guidelines) and use proper hand and respiratory hygiene. Salon clients must wear a medical mask for the duration of their appointment. This will be provided by the long-term care facility. Salons must also provide hand sanitizer for client use.

### **What if someone is showing symptoms before their visit?**

Hairdressing services are required to be cancelled if either the service provider or the client is experiencing COVID-19 related symptoms. Immediately follow the COVID-19 Management in Long Term Care Facilities Directive. As all clients will be residents of the long-term care facility, operators and facilities must retain a list of every resident who has received services and when these services were provided.

### **What if a resident or salon staff member shows signs or symptoms of Covid19? Do we suspend visits?**

Yes. Immediately follow the guidance provided in the COVID-19 Management in Long Term Care Facilities Directive.

## **BUS TRIPS FOR SIGHTSEEING PURPOSES**

### **How many residents can go offsite on the bus at a time?**

No more than 10 people can be on the bus. This includes the driver, residents and staff. Facilities are expected to group the same residents together each time and maintain consistent staff, where possible.

### **Does the bus need to be owned by the facility? Or can it be leased?**

The bus can be owned or leased.

### **What precautions are required?**

Bus drivers must be screened using the same protocols as visitors to a facility and contact between the driver and residents/staff should be limited. The bus must be cleaned before and after each use.

### **Where can we take residents?**

Trips are for sightseeing only, leaving the facility grounds in order to provide residents with a change of scenery. Residents and staff are not allowed disembark the bus.