

Province announces changes to visitor restrictions

The Provincial Health Officer announced changes today to visitor restrictions in long-term care and assisted living. These changes continue to support essential visits and now allow family and social visits within established criteria, supported by a detailed, written plan in accordance with the practice requirements. This plan must be available for Licensing or the Assisted Living Registry, and will require a visitor list, with contact information to be maintained.

These changes apply only to visitors. Restrictions on volunteers have not changed.

What You Need to Know to Enable Family and Social Visits

To minimize the risk of COVID-19 transmission during visits, care organizations must develop a written safety plans on how they will meet the following practice requirements:

- There is NO ACTIVE COVID-19 outbreak at the care home or assisted living residence. Visits will cease
- immediately following a declaration of outbreak and will immediately continue when an outbreak is declared over.
- Social visits must be scheduled in advance between the visitor and the care home or residence.
- A maximum of one visitor to allow for effective social distancing practices.
- Visits will occur in one of three designated locations, outdoors (when weather permits), indoors, or individual single-resident room (when a resident has limited mobility).
- Care organizations will provide guidance on social visits, including any safety processes and details where visits will take place; this information must be provided to visitors and residents.
- Care organizations will set clear signage and mark suitable locations to help families and residents have a safe and successful visit.
- Care organizations will screen for signs and symptoms of illness before each visit. Visitors with sign of illness will not be allowed to visit.
- Care organizations will instruct visitors when to perform hand hygiene, on etiquette around coughing and sneezing, and social distancing.

- Visitors must bring and wear masks during the entire time they're on a care organization's property.
- Care organizations will instruct visitors how to put on and take off any required PPE when visiting residents who are on Droplet and Contact Precautions.
- Visitors will go directly to the resident they are visiting; and will immediately leave following the visit.
- Care organizations must have an adequate number of staff to pre-screen visitors, screen visitors on arrival, provide information on infection prevention and control, monitor the visit, and confirm visitors have left following a visit.
- Following the visit, all furniture and surfaces in the visit area must be sanitized, according to [BC Centre for Disease Control Infection Protection and Control COVID-19 Guidance](#).

Can Residents Participate in Outside Social Activities and Appointments?

Long-Term Care

- Residents limit their social activities and appointments to those that are medically necessary.
- If a resident must leave for necessary care or treatment the care organization will call the medical facility receiving the resident and the transportation to discuss necessary precautions
- Residents with confirmed or suspected COVID-19, who need necessary medical attention will wear a surgical mask when leaving their room; droplet and contact precautions must be maintained the entire time the resident is outside their room.
- Residents returning from an outpatient appointment do not require 14-day isolation; instead, staff must complete a point of care risk assessment and determine appropriate measures.
- Care organizations will, whenever possible, clean all mobility aides before the resident leaves their room and again when they return from an appointment.

Assisted Living

- Residents can engage in social and external activities approved by general public health guidance.
- Older clients with chronic health conditions should avoid large gatherings and other people who are ill; they should maintain social distancing at all times and wear a non-medical mask in enclosed spaces that do not call for safe social distancing.

For more detailed information, refer to the Ministry of Health's [Infection Prevention and](#)

[Control Requirements for COVID-19 in Long Term Care and Seniors' Assisted Living](#)

To help support changes in the visitor policy, the provincial government will provide \$160 million to care homes to hire up to three full-time equivalent staff in both public and private care residences.

Charting a Course for Safe Visitation in Long-term Care

In response to changes announced today by the Provincial Health Officer on visitation in long-term care and assisted living, SafeCare BC, in collaboration with Family Caregivers of British Columbia, is proposing a standardized solution that will facilitate family and friends in supporting loved ones in care, while addressing concerns around safety for residents and workers.

This approach provides a roadmap for a voluntary, province-wide program that addresses key safety issues linked to visitation—an approach that would continue to show BC as a leader in Canada's pandemic response.

With the support of the continuing care sector, SafeCare BC and Family Caregivers of British Columbia are proposing that family members or friends wanting to support their loved ones in a care home, as permitted by the care home's safety plan and regional public health direction, would become "COVID-competent" by taking three basic orientation modules, printing off a record of completion and then completing a site-specific safety orientation at the care home.