

Q&A: Order 14 Visitor Policy

Q. My loved one is a continuing care or licenced supportive living resident. Am I allowed to visit?

A. At this time we are permitting designated essential visitors:

- Where the resident's quality of life and/or care needs cannot be met without their assistance, or
- When a resident is dying

Q. Are all designated essential visitors permitted entry to the facilities where their loved one lives?

A. Designated essential visitors are only permitted entry if a resident is at the end of their life, or to provide essential care and support if staff are unable to do so. Designated essential visitors must talk with the operator about the resident's unmet needs, and their ability to assist, to determine if you are permitted entry.

All visits must be pre-arranged with the operator. Designated essential visitors cannot just show up at the facility and expect to be permitted entry.

Q. My loved one is a continuing care or licenced supportive living resident and is dying/palliative. Am I allowed to visit?

A. We expect that individuals who are dying should have the opportunity to have their family/visitors at their side while following the guidelines in place to ensure everyone's safety. Visitors are limited to one at a time (with the exception of when a child is accompanied, or if the room is of a sufficient size to accommodate two visitors who can be two metres distant from each other, two visitors may attend at the same time).

- The policy is not intended to limit visits to the final hours or days before death.
- While it is difficult to be precise around when an individual is at end of life, in the context of COVID-19, visitation at end of life refers to the last two weeks of life.
 - A suggested consideration when making this determination is, "Would I be surprised if this resident was alive in 2 weeks from now?"

Q. My loved one is a continuing care or licenced supportive living resident but isn't dying/palliative. Am I allowed to visit now if we stay outdoors?

A. Now that the weather is improving, outdoor visits are also acceptable and encouraged, following all physical distancing requirements. All visitors must use a mask or face covering and remain outdoors at all times. Groups must not exceed three, including the resident and the designated essential visitor, and all outdoor visits must be arranged with the operator.

Q. As a visitor, what do I need to do to keep continuing care or licenced supportive living residents safe from COVID-19?

A. When visiting a continuing care resident, visitors must:

- Undergo a health screening
- Wear requested PPE
- Adhere to physical distancing
- Practice hand washing and good hygiene
- Stay in designated areas
- Follow all facility directions.

Do not visit if you are sick.

Q. Am I allowed to bring gifts when I visit a continuing care or licenced supportive living resident?

A. We think the virus generally only survives for a few hours on a surface or object, but it may be possible for it to survive several days under some conditions. To be safe, please refrain from bringing unessential gifts.

Q. Are operators able to make further restrictions above the provincial visitor policy?

A. No, not without consulting the appropriate partner (e.g. AHS, Alberta Health, Seniors and Housing, Community and Social Services).

Q. Why are there such variances in the approach that operators are taking with respect to visitors?

A. If several designated essential visitors meet this criteria in any one facility, it is acceptable for an operator to create a reasonable approach that responds to requests in a way that ensures both resident care needs and safe visitor presence (including consideration of operational feasibility and the availability of staff to facilitate the visits, as per requirements) to balance the needs of all. Operators must be transparent about their approach with residents and designated essential visitors.

This may include staggering visits, phasing visitors in on a unit-by-unit basis, or other creative approaches that ensure residents are receiving the essential quality of life and/or care they require in response to unmet needs.

Q. Some facilities schedule ‘drive-by parades’ and ‘visits through the window’. Are these still permitted?

A. In addition to the role of designated essential visitors and the opportunity for outdoor visits, operators, staff, residents and families should continue to work together to find innovative, accessible and feasible solutions to tackle any negative consequences, such as social isolation and loneliness. This may include scheduled visits ‘through the window’ and ‘drive-by parades’ as part of social/leisure activity programming, while following all guidelines and requirements for enhanced cleaning protocols and group activities.

Q. What considerations are being explored in regards to PPE and visitation?

A. All outdoor visitors must continuously mask during the visit and follow appropriate physical distancing requirements, as appropriate (e.g. considerations for pushing wheelchair, being hard of hearing). Any type of mask (e.g. non-medical) should be permitted.

Indoor designated essential visitors must wear a mask continuously throughout their time in the facility and plus any other personal protective equipment (PPE) that might be required depending on the circumstances at the facility.

Q. When and what PPE will be provided to residents and visitors to wear during visits?

A. Outdoor visitors will be permitted to use any type of mask (e.g. non-medical) while indoor visitors will be provided with a surgical/procedure mask and any other required PPE.

Q. Do continuing care and licensed supportive living facilities have enough PPE to support resident/visitor socialization?

A. We continue to work with all facilities serving vulnerable populations to make sure they have the PPE they need to support the continued safety of staff, residents and visitors.

Q. Why did the Alberta government decide to make these amendments?

A. Alberta seniors have contributed greatly to our province and it's imperative we work to maintain their quality of life. We know residents rely on social connections with friends and family, which is why we're working to support these connections while maintaining safety. It is also important continuing care residents who are nearing the end of life receive the comfort of loved ones.

Q. Given the outbreaks and the number of deaths related to COVID-19 in continuing care facilities, are these amendments to visiting restrictions really a good idea?

A. Maintaining social connections are an important quality of life factor; however, in-person visits should only take place when proper safety measures are followed. Otherwise, continuing care residents and loved ones are encouraged to connect remotely.