

## NEWS RELEASE

# Welcoming Caregivers to Ontario's Long-Term Care Homes

## Ontario Provides Update to Visitor's Policy with Easy-to-Follow Guidelines for Accommodating Caregivers

September 2, 2020

[Long-Term Care](#)

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TORONTO — The Ontario government is updating the visitor policy for long-term care homes to help operators implement consistent visiting practices across the province. The policy is clarifying guidance about visits from caregivers to help all homes welcome caregivers as of September 9, 2020.

Since March, 'essential visitors' to long-term care homes have included individuals performing essential support services or those visiting a very ill or palliative resident. Under this umbrella, 'caregivers' are essential visitors and important partners in care who provide direct care to residents — such as helping with feeding, mobility, hygiene, or cognitive stimulation. They can be family members or friends, privately hired caregivers, paid companions and/or translators.

Operators have been encouraged to facilitate visits by caregivers, however, implementation has been inconsistent. The updated policy provides clarity that caregivers are allowed to visit homes at any time, including during an outbreak, subject to direction from the local public health unit. This will support better implementation across homes.

The updated visitor policy outlines that:

- Each resident and/or their substitute decision maker may designate a maximum of two caregivers.
- Caregivers can visit, without time limits.
- If a home is not in outbreak, and the resident is not self-isolating or symptomatic, caregivers can visit together. If a home is in outbreak, or the resident is self-isolating or symptomatic, they must visit one at a time to limit risk of transmission and follow direction from the local public health unit.

"Bringing comfort and care, caregivers make a vital contribution to the overall well-being of long-term care residents," said Dr. Merrilee Fullerton, Minister of Long-Term Care. "Today's announcement will ensure that guidelines on their visits are applied consistently across homes so that all residents get the support they deserve."

Direction on safety in long-term care homes will continue to be updated as Ontario's experience with COVID-19 evolves. The government will continue to make every effort to support the safety and emotional wellbeing of residents and the staff who care for them.

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### Quick Facts

- Examples of caregivers include family members who provide direct care, privately hired caregivers, paid companions or translators.
- All visitors should pass active screening before entering a home. This includes a temperature check, questions on symptoms and exposures to COVID-19. All support workers, all caregivers, as well as any general visitor who is visiting indoors, should verbally attest to the home that they have tested negative for COVID-19 within the previous two weeks and not subsequently tested positive. Homes are not required to provide the testing. Where a support worker requires immediate access to the home in an emergency situation, the home does not need to ask for a verbal attestation for a negative COVID-19 test result.
- All visitors must wear surgical/procedure masks inside the home. Essential visitors are also required to wear additional personal protective equipment for interactions with residents who are self-isolating, suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19.
- For general visitors, the scheduling of visits will continue to be up to individual homes' discretion, as long as residents are assured at least one visit with a maximum of two general visitors per week, lasting a minimum of 30 minutes. Homes are



encouraged to make these visits longer, if possible. Visits begin when residents and visitors are seated in the visiting area, and staff are expected to respect resident privacy.

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## Additional Resources

- Visit Ontario's [website](#) to learn more about how the province continues to protect Ontarians from COVID-19.
  - The [COVID-19 Stakeholder Communications web page](#) provides a timeline of communications to the long-term care sector.
  - [Emergency information and orders](#)
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