

October 6, 2020

NOTICE TO ALL LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES AND RETIREMENT HOMES
OPH ADVISORY: Facilities Cease Non-Essential Absences and New Visitor Policy

Ottawa Public Health (OPH) recognizes the substantial challenges facilities face in safeguarding residents, staff, family, and essential visitors, while simultaneously allowing for activities and visits that improve the residents' quality of life. However, strict adherence to infection prevention and control (IPAC) best practices and outbreak management guidelines is essential to reduce the transmission of COVID-19 and other illness among our most vulnerable.

LTCH and RHs are required to ensure the protection of all those living in and working at the facility. OPH endeavors to support facilities through providing recommendations for control measures that may reduce the risk of spread within this population.

Ottawa has seen a sharp increase in COVID-19 cases in our community, as well as new outbreaks in LTCH and RHs. This puts our most vulnerable population at a higher risk. Residents leaving facilities for non-essential absences puts fellow residents and staff at risk due to the increasing number of people with COVID in the community; as such, **OPH strongly advises that such non-essential absences cease until community transmission is reduced.**

Essential absences (such as for necessary health care services or emergency room visits) must continue, but residents should be made aware of the risks of potential exposures and provided with the information on how to reduce their risks. This includes:

- Any resident leaving the facility must be screened on their return as per [Ministry guidelines](#). Residents must be provided with a medical mask to be worn at all times when outside of the home (if tolerated) and reminded about the importance of public health measures including physical distancing.
- For **short essential absences** (including single night overnight stays in Emergency Room), residents do not require to be tested or isolated upon return, unless an identified exposure to a person with COVID-19 has occurred during the absence.
- For **all other essential absences** (including admission to hospital, spending two or more nights in Emergency Room, or are otherwise away from the facility overnight), residents must self-isolate for 14 days on readmission to the facility and be tested as per latest Ministry recommendations.
- Facilities should carefully monitor residents who have left the facility for essential absences; in addition, all residents are to be screened twice daily for typical or atypical symptoms and fever as per Directive #3.

In addition, the province has updated its [visitor policy](#) to address areas with higher community spread of COVID-19. **As of October 7, 2020, where an area has been identified as having higher community spread, visits by general visitors are not allowed in LTCHs.**

Only essential visitors, including up to one caregiver per resident, may visit.

Caregivers are essential visitors who are designated by a resident or their substitute decision maker and who:

- provide direct care to residents, such as helping with feeding, mobility, hygiene, or cognitive stimulation
- are family members or friends, privately hired caregivers, paid companions and/or translators

Together, with our health system partners, OPH's approach to LTCHs and RHs continues to prioritize staff and resident safety.

If you have any questions, please contact our IPAC and Outbreak Reporting Line at: 613- 580-2424, ext. 26325.

Sincerely,



Vera Etches MD, MHSc, CCFP,
FRCPC Medical Officer of Health
Ottawa Public Health