

June 3, 2021

**MEMO TO:** Long-Term Care Home Licensees

**FROM:** Erin Hannah  
Associate Deputy Minister

**SUBJECT:** Upcoming Changes Related to Absences and Visitors Policy

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I would like to begin by acknowledging and sincerely thanking you for your quick work in implementing or starting to implement the changes announced last Friday regarding outdoor visits between residents and their loved ones. I appreciate that the short notice did not provide ample opportunity to plan and organize, and this may have put you in difficult positions with residents and family members. This is not our preferred approach and I appreciate the feedback received from our home partners underscoring the need for advance notice to changes coming into effect.

I know we were all lifted by the heartwarming stories of families reuniting after almost a year, and today I write to you to share additional changes we are making to improve quality of life for residents as Ontario progresses along the Roadmap to Reopen. As a next step, the ministry has consulted with the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health to implement the following changes to Directive 3 and the MLTC Guidance Document and Visitor Policy. These changes announced today will be effective as of June 9, 2021:

- Social and temporary absences for those residents who are fully immunized will now be permitted. Homes should provide a medical mask to the resident (as tolerated) and remind them to follow public health measures, such as physical distancing and hand hygiene, while they are away from the home.
- Where a resident has mobility limitations or health conditions (i.e. factors unrelated to weather) that make participating in outdoor visits highly unlikely or impossible, a maximum of 1 general visitor per resident may visit indoors at a time. A maximum of 1 caregiver may also be present during the visit.
- Regardless of resident and visitor vaccination status, brief hugs can now take place. Where both the resident and visitors are fully immunized close physical contact, including handholding, can now take place safely. It continues to be

important that residents and visitors continue to adhere to public health measures in the home, including good hand hygiene and appropriate masking.

- Essential Caregivers and general visitors who are fully immunized (and therefore able to have close physical contact with the resident) are not required to wear eye protection whether visiting indoors or outdoors.

General visitors shall be permitted indoors regardless of their immunization status and must adhere to physical distancing (unless otherwise permitted), PPE and other IPAC measures the homes have in place. General visitors entering the home for an indoor visit will be actively screened and are required to undergo rapid antigen testing in accordance with the [Minister's Directive on Surveillance Testing](#). General visitors must wait for a negative antigen test result before proceeding beyond entry points / areas in homes.

Directive #3, the MLTC Guidance Document and the Visitor Policy have been updated and are available online.

### **Updates to Surveillance Testing**

There are also two updates on surveillance testing reflecting guidance from the Ministry of Health:

- Individuals who have previously been diagnosed with and cleared of a COVID-19 infection will now be required to resume asymptomatic screening testing after 90 days from their COVID-19 infection (based on the date of their positive result).
- In line with the Roadmap to Reopen, the frequency of testing is being revised in the MOH guidance to a rapid antigen test 2-3 times/week in Step 1. Further details will be provided through the updated MOH guidance.

**Please note, Directive 3 and the MOH testing guidance will be updated soon. The links in the MLTC Guidance Document, Visitor Policy, Minister's Directive on surveillance testing, and new Visitor, Absences and Social Gatherings Snapshot will take you to the old versions until that time. The MLTC Guidance Document and Visitor Policy will be available on ontario.ca later today.**

Thank you in advance for the committed effort you will make to put these next changes into practice. Your energy and enthusiasm for improving the lives of residents is unflagging and greatly appreciated.

As always, we are available to support homes directly should they have any questions related to the pandemic, including regarding policies on absences and visitors. The team can be reached by emailing [MLTCPandemicResponse@ontario.ca](mailto:MLTCPandemicResponse@ontario.ca).

Sincerely,

Erin Hannah

Attachment: Updated FAQs: Directive #3, MLTC Guidance, and Visiting Policy, (new)  
Visitor, Absences and Social Gatherings Snapshot

c: Richard Steele, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Long-Term Care (MLTC)  
Helen Angus, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Health (MOH)  
Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health  
Dr. Barbara Yaffe, Associate Chief Medical Officer of Health  
Alison Blair, Associate Deputy Minister, Pandemic Response and Recovery  
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Lisa Levin, Chief Executive Officer, AdvantAge Ontario  
Donna Duncan, Chief Executive Officer, Ontario Long Term Care Association  
Monika Turner, Association of Municipalities of Ontario  
Michael Jacek, Association of Municipalities of Ontario  
Colleen Geiger, President and CEO (Acting), Public Health Ontario  
Jeff Butler, Assistant Deputy Minister, LTC Pandemic Response, MLTC  
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