2016 Increase in the Comfort Allowance for Long-Term Care Home Residents and Hospital Patients in Chronic Care Beds

Questions and Answers

For LTC home operators and public hospital chronic care administrators and Local Health Integration Networks

1. What is the long-term care and chronic care comfort allowance?

The comfort allowance is the portion of income retained by low income Long-Term Care home residents and hospital patients receiving chronic care for their personal needs above and beyond the meal and accommodation services funded through the co-payment. This includes personal needs such as clothing, telephone and cable services, and the Ontario Drug Benefit Program’s mandatory prescription co-payment.

2. How much will the comfort allowance increase by in 2016?

The comfort allowance will increase by 1.5%, retroactive to September 1, 2016. Since the comfort allowance amount is rounded, the proposed increase will result in the comfort allowance increasing from $140.00/month to $143.00/month. This increase is aligned with the increase to the Ministry of Community and Social Services’ Personal Needs Allowance (PNA). Maintaining alignment between the comfort allowance and the PNA is desirable to promote equity and consistency among low-income Ontarians receiving personal needs benefits under publicly-funded programs.

3. How is the comfort allowance increase determined?

- The comfort allowance is always stated as a dollar amount. Thus, any increase is rounded up to the nearest dollar, so the person benefits fully from the increase.

  - Formula for increasing comfort allowance:

    $140 \times 1.5\% = \$2.1 \text{ which is rounded up to } \$3.00. \quad \$140 + \$3.00 = \$143.00$

4. How will the comfort allowance increase affect residents/patients with rate reductions?

Effective September 1, 2016, LTC home residents and public hospital chronic care patients approved for reduced co-payment rates will be able to retain an additional $3 per month for their comfort allowance.
Since LTC homes administer rate reductions using Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (Ministry) systems and processes, the Ministry has provided further details to LTC homes on how updated rate reductions reflecting the comfort allowance increase will be available electronically in the Enhanced Rate Reduction Information System Application (E-RRISA). All applications successfully submitted into the current system (i.e., E-RRISA) prior to September 1st will be updated automatically. LTC Home staff will not be required to re-submit these applications.

Since hospitals have their own system through which rate reductions are administered, hospital administrators are required to make the adjustment for patients with reduced co-payment rates to ensure they retain the additional $3 per month.