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June 12, 2020

MEMORANDUM TO: Executive Director
MCCSS-funded Congregate Living Settings

FROM: Sandra Russell, Director - North Region
Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services

RE: Re-introductions of Visits in Congregate Living Settings

On behalf of the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services I wish to express my sincere thanks and appreciation for the efforts you and your staff have made throughout the COVID-19 outbreak to care for some of Ontario's most vulnerable individuals.

As you know, the [Guidance: Congregate Living for Vulnerable Populations](#) was released May 28, 2020 and included recommendations about access of essential visitors into a home. As a complementary way of restoring greater access to personal visits during this time, I am sharing additional information and criteria that allow for personal visits in outdoor spaces.

Please note that this new direction on personal visits in outdoor spaces will go into effect on June 18, 2020 allow time for agencies to establish appropriate policies and protocols to meet these criteria for personal visits.

We understand how difficult these last few months have been for residents, their families/caregivers and staff. In facilitating these changes, the government is taking a gradual approach so as to ensure the safety of residents, visitors and staff. As we monitor the implementation of these changes, we will re-evaluate them regularly.

These changes do not apply to the youth justice sector at this time.

If you have any questions, please contact your MCCSS Program Supervisor.

Be well,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sandra Russell". The signature is written in a dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Sandra Russell

Director, North Region

Appendix Important Direction to Follow

On April 23, 2020 the government released its COVID-19 Action Plan for Vulnerable People. The Action Plan included an action to limit non-essential visitors in congregate living settings, as an important measure to reduce exposure and prevent spread of COVID-19.

On May 28, 2020, the Guidance: Congregate Living for Vulnerable Populations was issued and provided further recommendations that congregate living settings develop policies that limit non-essential visitors.

This information is supplemental to the Guidance and allows for outdoor visits with residents of congregate living settings, providing specific requirements are followed.

At this time, we would like to review several important things for you to know, and for you to do, in implementing the new visitor requirements.

Allowing Visitors – No Outbreak

To Know:

- Preventing the transmission of COVID-19 remains a key priority. Settings experiencing outbreak must maintain strict limitations on the movement of people into and out of the settings to control further spread

To Do:

- Only allow outdoor visits if the setting is NOT in outbreak
- If the setting had previously experienced an outbreak it must have been declared resolved by the Local Public Health Unit

Communication and Education

To Know:

- The expectation is the congregate care setting is taking steps to ensure all parties understand the parameters and protocols that will guide the outdoor visit, and what will happen if they are not followed

To Do:

- *Ensure you have a clear process for communicating with residents, families and staff about the resumption of visits and the associated policies and procedures in place to maintain the highest of IPAC standards prior to, during and after visits*

- This must include information and education on:
 - How scheduling of visits will be undertaken in a manner that will allow:
 - Up to 2 visitors at a time per resident
 - Time-limited visits, but not restricted to less than 30 minutes
 - At minimum one visit per week per resident
 - Staffing and space capacity to maintain safety of residents, staff and visitors
 - Enhanced cleaning in between visit space use
 - **The screening process that visitors will have to pass to be allowed to visit, including documenting the attestation that the visitor has tested negative for COVID-19 within the previous 2 weeks and subsequently not tested positive**
 - Hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette practices that must be followed prior to and during the visit
 - **How to properly put on and take off face coverings, and their proper and continuous use during the visit, and confirmation that visitor(s) are responsible for supplying their own face covering**
 - The importance of maintaining a minimum of 2 metres (6 feet) physical distance for the full duration of the visit (between residents, visitor(s) and staff)
 - Whether, what and how gifts can be shared during the visit, including how they will be fully sanitized prior to sharing
 - That all visits will be logged and documented, including the name of the visitor, the date\time of the visit, the name of the resident visited, and the name of the staff who supervised the visit
 - The consequences of non-adherence with the policies and procedures, up to and including the discontinuation of visits

Screening

To Know:

- Screening remains a critical infection prevention and control measure that must be strictly implemented for ALL visits.

To Do:

- All visitors must pass active screening every time they are on the premises and attest that they are not experiencing any of the typical and atypical symptoms of COVID-19.

- Screening must include documenting the attestation that the visitor has tested negative for COVID-19 within the previous 2 weeks and subsequently not tested positive. The congregate care setting is not responsible for supplying the test.
- Visitors should not be allowed to visit if they do not pass the screening

Visit Parameters- Space

To Know:

- The risk of transmitting COVID-19 decreases when outdoors, as a result of more continuous airflow.

To Do:

- In this phase, visits can only take place outdoors
- Suitable space must first try to be found on-site. If the site does not include suitable space then nearby public space may be used, with protocols in place to maintain a minimum of 2 metres (6 feet) physical distance from members of the public, at all times
- Visits of residents to the family residential premises (e.g. visits home) remain prohibited
- The outdoor space must be of a sufficient size and layout to allow for a minimum of 2 metres (6 feet) physical distance between the resident, the visitor(s) and the staff
- The outdoor space must provide for seating\shade as appropriate to support a comfortable and safe visit
- All furniture used must be wipeable, and fully cleaned and disinfected after each use
- At no time may a non-essential visitor enter the congregate living setting. The outdoor space must be fully accessible without entrance through the congregate living setting

Staffing

To Know:

- The health and safety of residents and the staff that support them remain a priority. Outdoor visits can only be provided when there is sufficient staffing in place to support the ongoing operation of the setting

To Do:

- Staff must be made aware of the schedule of visits and the role and responsibilities of the staff supervising the visit and the staff supporting the concurrent ongoing operation of the setting and other residents
- Residents attending an outdoor visit must be taken outside and brought back inside by staff
- The staff must maintain visual contact for the duration of the visit
- The congregate living setting must ensure that staffing is available to support the supervision of the outdoor visit as well as sufficient staffing for ongoing operations within the setting
- Staff must continue to wear a mask for source protection for the duration of the outdoor visit and maintain a minimum of 2 metres (6 feet) physical distance from the visitor(s)
- Staff must monitor the visit for adherence with the visitation policies and procedures (e.g., visitor following hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette measures and maintaining a minimum of 2 metres (6 feet) physical distance and record any concerns. Where a visitor is not adhering to the agreed protocols, the visit must be discontinued