

Enhanced Infection Control Practices COVID-19 Pandemic & Safety Plan Updated: February 7, 2022

This is a comprehensive document that outlines the most current enhanced infection control practices that we have implemented during the COVID-19 Pandemic. It is a fluid document subject to change.

Section 18: Resident Absences



Resident Absences

PURPOSE:

This policy supports resident absences while adhering to the current directives from the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Long-Term Care and Public Health Ontario Guidelines and all other applicable guidelines.

Belvedere Heights recognizes that being able to connect with friends and family is essential to a resident's emotional health and well-being so our visits are guided by the following principles:

Safety: Any approach to visiting must balance the health and safety needs of residents, staff, and visitors, and ensure risks are mitigated.

Emotional Well-being: Allowing visitors is intended to support the emotional well-being of residents by reducing any potential negative impacts related to social isolation.

Equitable Access: All individuals seeking to visit a resident must be given equitable visitation access, consistent with resident preference and within reasonable restrictions that safeguard residents.

Flexibility: The physical/infrastructure characteristics of the long-term care home, its staffing availability, and the current status of the home with respect to Personal

Protective Equipment (PPE) are all variables to take into account when setting home-specific policies.

Equality: Residents have the right to choose their visitors. In addition, residents and/or their substitute decision makers have the right to designate caregivers.

As the pandemic situation evolves in Ontario, this direction regarding visits at long-term care homes will be adjusted as necessary, keeping the safety and emotional well-being of residents and staff at the forefront.

Definitions:

There are four types of absences:

1. **Medical absences** are absences to seek medical and/or health care and include:

- outpatient medical visits and a single visit (less than or equal to 24 hours in duration) to the Emergency Department
- all other medical visits (for example, admissions or transfers to other health care facilities, multi-night stays in the Emergency Department)

2. **Compassionate and palliative absences** include, but are not limited to, absences for the purposes of visiting a dying loved one

3. **Short term (day) absences** are absences that are less than or equal to 24 hours in duration. There are two types of short term (day) absences:

- essential absences include absences for reasons of groceries, pharmacies, and outdoor physical activity
- social absences include absences for all reasons not listed under medical, compassionate/palliative, and/or essential absences that do not include an overnight stay

4. **Temporary absences** include absences involving two or more days and one or more nights for non-medical reasons

Effective February 7, 2022: Short term day absences may resume for residents who have had at least three COVID -19 vaccine doses. Temporary absences are suspended at this time for all residents.

For all permitted absences, residents must be:

- provided with a medical mask when they are leaving the home

- reminded to practice public health measures such as physical distancing and hand hygiene when out of the home
- sign a declaration form prior to leaving the home after reviewing the benefits of limiting contact with others, including avoiding large social gatherings, following masking and physical distancing as much as possible and only being in close contact with people who have had three doses of COVID-19 vaccine doses.
- actively screened for symptoms upon their return to the home

As per Directive #3, homes cannot restrict or deny any short term or temporary absences for medical or palliative or compassionate reasons at any time. This includes when a resident is in isolation or when a home is in an outbreak. In these situations, homes must contact their local public health to obtain further direction.

Type of Leave	Resident Requirements
<p><u>Short term social day absences</u> include absences for all reasons not listed under medical, compassionate or palliative or essential absences that do not include an overnight stay.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Effective February 7, 2022</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Must have had at least three COVID-19 vaccine doses. 2. Outings must be scheduled in advance. 3. Residents must be provided with a medical mask to be worn when outside of the Home (if tolerated) and reminded about the importance of public health measures including physical distancing, frequent hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette. A brochure is available at the screening desk for residents. 4. Sign a declaration form prior to leaving the home after reviewing the benefits of limiting contact with others, including avoiding large social gatherings, following masking and physical distancing as much as possible and only being in close contact with people who have had three doses of COVID-19 vaccine doses. A brochure will be provided prior to leaving the Home. 5. Actively screen residents upon return. 6. Isolation is required. 7. Undergo rapid antigen testing on day 1, 2, 4, 5, 6 and PCR test on day 3 and day 7. Isolation may be discontinued after a negative PCR test on day 7.

<p>Medical appointments and Essential Absences</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Residents attending a medical appointment must wear a medical mask at all times when outside the Home (if tolerated). The Home must provide the medical mask and remind residents about the importance of public health measures including physical distancing, frequent hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette; brochures are available at the screening desk. 2. Actively screen residents upon return; 3. Undergo rapid antigen and PCR testing on day 3 followed by a PCR on day 7. Those who leave on frequent medical/essential absences (for example, dialysis appointments) are to have a rapid test and a laboratory-based PCR test, on the same day, two times per week (for example, one rapid test and PCR test on Tuesdays and Fridays) 4. No isolation is required unless positive result is received. 5. If known exposure to a case, PCR test on day 1 and day 7 and isolate until a negative result is confirmed from day 7
<p>Temporary Absences are for personal reasons, which include absences that involve two or more days and one or more nights for non-medical reasons.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">New: Not permitted at this time</p> <p>Overnight absences for social purposes are being suspended, regardless of vaccination status. Residents who wish to leave the home overnight, for social purposes will need to follow the appropriate discharge process, as required in section 147.1 of O.Reg.79/10 (General) under the Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007 as well as the re-admission protocol when they return at a later date.</p>
<p>Palliative or compassionate Absences</p>	<p>Residents must be provided with a medical mask to be worn when outside of the Home (if tolerated) and reminded about the importance of public health measures including physical distancing, frequent hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette.</p> <p>As per Directive #3, homes cannot restrict or deny any short term or temporary absences for medical or palliative or compassionate reasons at any time. This includes when a resident is in isolation or when a Home is in an outbreak. In these situations, homes must contact their local public health to obtain further direction.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Actively screen residents upon return;

	<ol style="list-style-type: none">2. Rapid antigen tests are required for 7 continuous days or PCR tests on day 1 and 7.3. Isolation is required until a negative result is received after day 7.
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Guidelines for Absences

- The Home cannot restrict or deny absences for medical and/or palliative or compassionate reasons at any time. This includes when a resident is in isolation or when a Home is in outbreak. In these situations, the Home must contact the North Bay Parry Sound Public Health Unit to obtain further direction.
- Registered staff/screener will provide all residents leaving the Home with a mask, will review the public health guidelines outlined in the COVID safety information handout and provide the resident and/or family member with the brochure found at the screening desk. Masks are to be worn at all times during the outing.
- Residents must be actively screened at the main entrance prior to leaving and upon return. The screener will notify the RN of the resident's return so that appropriate testing and/or isolation precautions can be initiated.
- Residents and visitors must comply with surveillance testing policy as applicable.
- Visitors accompanying residents will be screened at the main entrance prior to leaving and upon return.
- If a visitor does not pass the screening or does not comply with the Home's protocols, the absence may be cancelled.
- Visitors accompanying a resident will be provided a medical mask to be worn at all times when outside the home when physical distancing cannot be maintained. For example, when driving in their car until they reach their destination where physical distancing can be maintained.
- Encourage visitors who are accompanying a resident to have the resident sit in the rear passenger seat, if able, to provide distancing.

- When on a van or a bus, it is ideal that residents can remain socially distanced whenever possible. Additionally:
 - When possible, residents should remain in the cohorts assigned by the Home (particularly if not able to social distance)
 - Residents should be encouraged to mask and have alcohol rub/sanitizer readily available
 - Windows of vehicle should be open, if tolerated, to promote air circulation
 - Have seating arrangements as much as possible to facilitate contact tracing
- It should be ensured that the vehicle driver follows all precautions (e.g. masking), particularly when physical distancing may not be possible and if a physical barrier (i.e. Plexiglass) separating the driver from residents is not in place.