

June 30, 2020

RE: Updated provincial guidelines on visitation at Long-Term Care and Assisted Living

To all owners, licensees, operators, Directors of Facility and Directors of Long-Term Care Facilities,

Today, the Ministry of Health and Provincial Health Officer announced changes to visitation policies in Long Term Care and Seniors' Assisted Living Facilities. **As of today facilities can allow any visit they deem essential to a resident's physical health or mental well-being without applying for an exemption.** After developing a safety plan for social visits, the new policy will allow all residents to have visits from **one** family member or friend. We anticipate developing these plans will take one to two weeks to fully implement.

The Ministry of Health and the Provincial Health Officer have released updated infection control guidance and requirements to support this expanded visitation policy. The updated guidance document, dated June 30, can be found at http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/COVID19_LongTermCareAssistedLiving.pdf.

Visits that facility staff deem to be essential to the physical health or mental well-being of residents can begin immediately. Essential visits include, but are not limited to:

- Visits for compassionate care, including critical illness, palliative care, hospice care, end of life, and Medical Assistance in Dying;
- Visits paramount to the patient/client's physical care and mental well-being, including as follows:
 - Assistance with feeding;
 - Assistance with mobility;
 - Assistance with personal care;
 - Communication assistance for persons with hearing, visual, speech, cognitive, intellectual or memory impairments;
 - Assistance by designated representatives for persons with disabilities, including provision of emotional support;
- Visits for supported decision making; and
- Police, correctional officers and peace officers accompanying a patient/client for security reasons.

In order to allow regular social visits, a written safety plan must be developed in accordance with updated infection control guidance. The plan must be available for Licensing or the Assisted Living Registry if required. **Over the next two weeks, we will work with all facilities to help them develop safety plans to implement the new policy.** We have set up a sector-wide coordination call scheduled for Monday, July 6 at 10 a.m. to discuss the guidelines in more detail and provide further direction.

Under the updated guidelines, residents will be able to visit with **one** family member or friend once that facility has developed the required plan. All visits will be booked in advance to allow for them to be conducted safely. All visits will take place in specific “visiting areas” organized by each residence and visitors will need to bring a mask and wear it for the duration of the visit. Visits will not be allowed if there is an active COVID-19 outbreak at the residence. Visits will not be allowed if the visitor or the resident being visited are sick or have any COVID-19 symptoms.

If you have any questions, please contact Nader Massoud, Senior Licensing Officer, 604-675-3859 or nader.massoud@vch.ca.

Yours sincerely,



Dr. Althea Hayden MD, MPH, FRCPC
Medical Health Officer
Vancouver Coastal Health