Policy

The Dearness Home will provide an organized process to ensure a safe environment for visits that follows provincially mandated direction and Public Health infection control protocols. This policy must be read in conjunction with the appended education material and guidance documents.

Purpose

Within the ongoing and changing constraints of the pandemic, to seek to maintain emotional well-being by the provision of meaningful, equitable and safe access for visitors.

Visitor Type

Essential Visitor

Essential Visitors are the only visitors allowed to visit when a resident is self-isolating or symptomatic, or when the Home in outbreak.

Types of Essential Visitor:

- **Person performing essential support services** (i.e. food delivery, inspector, maintenance workers, or health care services – phlebotomy etc.) or as defined by MLTC and MSAA policies, as appropriate.

- **Person visiting a very ill or end-of-life resident:**
  - End of life period is determined by the physician and communicated to the Power of Attorney/Substitute Decision Maker (POA/SDM for care) by Dearness Home.
  - Maximum of six people may be designated as Essential Visitors for end-of-life by the SDM/POA.
  - A maximum of 3 visitors may be present in the resident’s room at any time, which can be either:
    - Three end-of-life visitors, or
    - Two end-of-life visitors and one Essential Caregiver

Please Note: The end-of-life visitor will always wear the provided butterfly sticker in a visible area of their upper bodies and does not have to observe visiting times.

- **Essential Support Worker:**
  - Type of essential visitor who is visiting to perform essential support services for the home or for a resident at the home (i.e. physicians, nurse practitioners, maintenance workers).

- **Essential Caregiver (EC):**
• Type of essential visitor who is designated by the resident and/or their POA/SDM and is visiting to provide direct care to the resident (e.g., supporting feeding, mobility, personal hygiene, cognitive stimulation, communication, meaningful connection, relational continuity and assistance in decision-making).

For full details, review the Essential Caregiver Information Package and Guidelines.

**General Visitor**

• Defined as any family member, close friend or neighbour, or a person hired by the resident or their POA/SDM for non-essential services.
• General visits include outdoor, window and virtual options, and must be scheduled with the Home by the resident or their POA/SDM.
• General visitors who are screened will be asked to verbally attest they read this policy every month.
• A maximum of two general visitors per resident may visit outdoors at a time, subject to direction from the local public health unit, provided the resident is not symptomatic or isolating. Caregiver(s) may also be present at these visits in addition to the general visitors. Please note that children under the age of two are not counted as a visitor.
• No general visitors are permitted for indoor visits.
• General visitors younger than 14 years of age must be accompanied by an adult and must follow all applicable public health measures that are in place at the home (for example, active screening, physical distancing, hand hygiene, masking for source control).

For more details, please review the Visitor Information, Indoor Visit; Visitor Information, Outside Visit; Dearness Home Visits – Which is Best for Me? documents.

**General Information**

**COVID-19 Response Framework**

• The Government has implemented a colour coded system for responding to the varying levels of infection in regions across the province (green, yellow, orange, red and grey).
• Access to the Home will vary according to the current designation of the London area (see detail in appendices).

**Communication**

• Dearness Home will communicate evolving visiting information and policy:
  • For Residents: via posting information on noticeboards and/or TV screens and channels, in-person conversations, and Resident Council minutes binder
  • For POA/SDM for care: via robo-calls, e-mails and posting information on the Dearness Home website.
• For Other Potential Visitors; via robo-calls and posting information on the Dearness website.

Please Note: Whenever practically possible, visiting changes will be implemented following either discussion with, or prior notice to, both the Resident Council and the Family Council.

Temporary Suspension of General Visits

• If Dearness is in suspected or confirmed outbreak, all non-essential visitations will be temporarily cancelled
• Visits will not occur when:
  • The resident has suspected or confirmed COVID-19
  • When the resident is currently observing 14-day droplet/contact isolation precautions
  • When London is placed into the Orange, Red or Grey provincial pandemic alert level, or when a Stay-At-Home Order is in effect (as per O. Reg 265/21).
• With the support of the Resident and Family Councils, and with consideration of any Government or Public Health Unit guidance, Dearness Home may suspend visits for temporary periods where it becomes apparent that the risk of transmission in our community is high

Shortages of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

• If Dearness Home is unable to supply surgical/procedure masks or other PPE required to ensure infection control, visitors will not be permitted in the Home.
• Essential Visitors who wish to enter Dearness Home on their employer’s instructions may do so if they have appropriate PPE supplied by their employer.

Responsibility

• The Manager, Community Life will monitor and oversee the Family Visits during a Pandemic.
• The Director of Care will direct infection control in relation to visits to the Home.
• The Administrator will have overall responsibility and draft policy and related guidelines.

Procedure for Visits to Dearness Home

• The Manager, Community Life will monitor and oversee scheduling visits during the times allotted on designated visit days.
• Indoor and Outdoor visits will be allotted in 30-minute increments to allow all families/friends to visit their loved ones. (Dearness Home has 243 residents)
• Every attempt will be made to meet requests for a resident visit one time each week, depending on available staffing resources.
• The outside and inside visiting areas will be cleaned and disinfected between every visit.
• The Home will create and maintain a list of General Visitors and Essential Caregivers, and of Essential Visitors at the end-of-life. These lists will be available for relevant/appropriate staff members to access.
• All visitors seeking access to the Dearness Home will enter through the main entrance and must pass an active screen, including a temperature check, in order to do so.
• After screening, all visitors (aside from Ministry inspectors from MLTC or MLSTD) must go to the Dearness COVID-19 testing centre for rapid testing.
• Details of screening questions, temperature requirements and staff responsibilities will vary according to applicable government and Public Health Unit guidance, and circumstances in the Home. Required processes will be detailed in internal documents that must be followed by screeners and relevant Dearness Home employees.

Determining Priority for Arranging General Visits

Dearness will consider the following:

• How well the resident is doing psychosocially dealing with isolation from family/friends.
• Pre-COVID-19 visiting frequency of the family.
• Resident decline in condition.
• Extenuating family circumstances (i.e. spouse is also isolated).
• Resident/family has not had virtual visits due to the family not having the appropriate technology (i.e. internet, iPad, etc.).

Scheduling General Visits

• Dearness Home will work with the resident, the POA/SDM for care to arrange visits – all materials will be shared, and the expectation is that all visits will be arranged through them.
• Each individual will be scheduled for a visit by the designated staff member.
• Every attempt will be made to accommodate a minimum of one visit for each resident per week depending on available staffing resources.
• Once scheduled, the visitor will be provided with this policy in person, via email, or be asked to view it on our website, or be able to view it upon arrival.
• The individual visiting a resident will be asked to not arrive any sooner than 30 minutes before their scheduled visit so that they are not crossing paths with other visitors.

Visitor Requirements (including screening, testing and PPE instructions)

• For Outside Visits, General visitors must follow provisions in “Visitor Information for Outside Visits” and the relevant guidance from the “Education Presentation – COVID-19” (see Appendix).
• For Inside Visits, visitors must follow provisions in “Visitor Information for Inside Visits” and the relevant guidance from the “Education Presentation – COVID-19” (see Appendix).

**Non-Adherence by Visitors**
- The Home has the discretion to end a visit by any visitor who repeatedly fails to adhere to the home’s visitor policy, provided:
  - The home has explained the applicable requirement(s) for the visitor;
  - The visitor has the resources to adhere to the requirement(s) (e.g., the home has supplied the PPE and demonstrated how to correctly put on PPE, etc.); and
  - The visitor has been given sufficient time to adhere to the requirement(s).
- The home must document when a visit has been ended due to non-adherence

**Temporarily Prohibiting a Visitor**
- Dearness Home has the discretion to temporarily prohibit a visitor in response to repeated and flagrant non-adherence with the home’s visitor policy. In exercising this discretion, Dearness will consider whether the non-adherence:
  - Can be resolved by successfully explaining and demonstrating how the visitor can adhere to the requirements.
  - Is within requirements that align with instruction in Directive #3 and guidance in the visiting policy by the Ministry of Long-Term Care.
  - Negatively impacts the health and safety of residents, staff, and other visitors in the Home.
  - Is demonstrated by the visitor over multiple visits.
  - Is by a visitor whose previous visits have been ended by the Home.
- Any decision to temporarily prohibit a visitor will:
  - Be made only after all other reasonable efforts to maintain safety during visits have been exhausted.
  - Stipulate a reasonable length of the prohibition.
  - Clearly identify what requirements the visitor should meet before visits may be resumed (e.g. reviewing the home’s visitor policy, reviewing Public Health Ontario resources, etc.).
  - Be documented by the Home.

**Appendices**
- Education Presentation – COVID-19
- Dearness Home Visits – Which Visit is Best for Me?
- Essential Caregiver Information Package and Guidelines
- Visitor Information for Inside Visit
- Visitor Information for Outside Visit