



September 4, 2020

Dear families, advocates and friends,

We once again I want to thank you for your patience during these challenging days as I recognize how difficult this has been not only on the people we support but also with our families, advocates and friends. We are pleased to let you know that short stay absences are now permitted under the Ministry guidelines. These guidelines were announced on August 28, 2020 to allow for more flexibility for outings and overnight absences for the people we support. Outdoor visits at the PCL homes will remain the same with visits eventually moving indoors as the weather changes. Please continue to connect with the Program Supervisor of the home where your family member lives to arrange for any visits at the PCL home. Please note that all types of visits and outings will be suspended in the event of a COVID-19 outbreak.

We are now able to resume short-stay absences, outings and community participation to maintain the social, emotional well-being and quality of life of people residing in congregate living settings. To maintain health and safety the following requirements must be met for an outing to occur:

- The person supported must pass active screening every time they re-enter the home after an outing with family, friends or own their own.
- They will need to be able to perform proper hand hygiene, practice physical distancing when in the community and wear a mask in indoor public spaces as required by Public Health.
- We are assisting the people we support to obtain masks and teaching them how to remain physically distanced and follow the new rules when out in the community.
- We would appreciate as much notice as possible if you plan to take your family member out for a day and will ask that you complete a screening for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 before this outing. This can be arranged on an individual basis with the Program Supervisor of the home.
- We understand that you may wish to hug and kiss your loved one, however the Ministry guidelines read as follows: *Physical contact (e.g. kissing or hugging) is not recommended as the best method of preventing transmission of COVID-19 is through physical distancing. However, in situations where physical distancing is not possible and/or physical contact is unavoidable, both people must wear a face covering (non-medical mask) as well as follow rigorous hand hygiene before and after any contact.*

We are now also able to allow essential overnight absences to family homes for the people we support. This is how the Ministry defines these visits: *An essential overnight absence (e.g. to a family home) is one **considered necessary** to maintain the health, wellness and safety, or any applicable legal rights, of a resident. Agencies should take careful consideration to support residents' emotional well-being through overnight absences.* There are some precautions that need to be considered before these can occur. Please connect with the Program Supervisor or Director of the home to discuss this option and determine if it would be in the best interests of the person supported. If a person does go on an overnight visit the following enhanced precautions must be able to be met for 14 days following the overnight visit:

- Upon return they must pass an active screening questionnaire that screens for signs and symptoms of and potential exposures to COVID-19.
- They will only be able to receive outdoor visitors to the PCL home during the 14 days.
- The person and staff will need to monitor for symptoms.
- They will have to avoid using common areas; however, if a common area cannot be avoided, the person must use a face covering (non-medical mask).
- They will need to limit their contact with other people living in the home.
- They will only be allowed to participate in group activities if physical distancing is maintained (i.e. a distance of 6 feet or 2 metres) and the use of a face covering (non-medical mask);
- They will need to be able to practice proper hand hygiene by washing their hands often (using soap and water or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer).
- They will need to adhere to respiratory etiquette; and,
- Continue to follow appropriate physical distancing guidelines (i.e., maintaining a distance of 6 feet or 2 metres).

The person will still be able to leave the home for outings and short stay absences and this will not re-set the timeline for the 14 days of enhanced precautions, but if they go on another overnight visit during this time the clock for the 14 days of enhanced precautions will begin again.

We greatly appreciate your patience throughout these last several months. It is our priority to safeguard the health and safety of all of those we support in our homes as well as our exceptional staff teams. Thank you for your cooperation with following these guidelines.

Sincerely,

Katherine Loveys
Executive Director
Parents for Community Living

For additional information on the guidelines please visit:

http://www.children.gov.on.ca/docs/MCCSS_Visitor_Guidelines_Congregate_Living-EN.pdf