

September 7, 2021

---

## Residents' Council Reminder, Guidance for Mixing Cohorts Indoors and Canadian Standards Association (CSA) Resident Surveys

Dear Residents, LTC Team Members and Supportive Partners,

We are sharing two important memos that impact Residents' Councils have been released from our Ministry of Long-Term Care.

### Residents' Council Reminders – August 30, 2021

On August 30, Brad Robinson, Acting Director of the LTC Inspections Branch with our Ministry of Long-Term Care (MLTC), issued a memo reminding all LTC homes that policies and procedures need to be in place that accommodate the continuation of Residents' Council meetings. The memo provided a listing some helpful resources that OARC has developed to spur on consideration and creativity in continuing with RC affairs. [Click here](#) to read the memo. Here is a quote taken from Brad's memo:

*“The meetings may take on a different format depending on the situation but the legislative requirement to accommodate the meetings still applies. It is also expected that the RCs will be provided with the appropriate PPE and space to meet so that physical distancing can be maintained and IPAC guidelines can be followed.”*

**OARC Supporting Residents:** In the work OARC has done with the Patient Ombudsman, the Commissioner's Investigation and in our daily connections with residents, we've learned that communication with and from you has often been a huge challenge. Many residents have said that they were not aware of what was going on in their homes, they had virtually no avenues to hear from and talk with management in their homes and consequently have felt increased isolation and powerlessness. In a crisis, it's often communication that suffers.

**Residents' Councils (RCs) are mandated (LTCHA, 2007):** Residents' Councils form a critical part of the quality improvement work in homes and are vital in providing residents and management teams a consistent, reliable, intentional mode of respective communication, both to celebrate what is working well, and to raise issues of concern that need to be addressed. Many Residents' Councils fell into silence the past year and a half.

**Thank You:** Congratulations and thank you to those home teams who tried many innovative, creative, committed ways to keep some semblance of Residents' Councils operating even through many competing priorities for time and resources. We salute you for living out your commitment to residents that their voice matters, and that they are critical in shaping their homes based on their experience.

## **Updated Guidance Document for LTC Homes – August 20, 2021**

The MLTC regularly reviews and updates their Guidance Document designed to assist homes with managing all aspects of operations during the pandemic. The Guidance Document has recently been updated to address the '**mixing of residents**'. A Questions and Answers resource has also been created that gives perspective and answers to specific questions that may arise. See below to access the relevant Ministry documents:

- [AsDM Memo](#)
- [MLTC Guidance Document](#)
- [MLTC Pandemic Response FAQs](#)
- [LTCH COVID-19 Outbreak Standard Operating Procedures](#)

## **HIGHLIGHTS from Guidance Document and Question & Answer Document**

### **Mixing Cohorts Indoors:**

Residents can also socialize indoors and interact with each other within and across cohorts; for example, this means a resident from one cohort can visit a resident from another cohort or two cohorts of residents can come together to watch a movie. If residents from different cohorts are mixing indoors then they should:

1. wear a mask (as tolerated); and
2. residents from different cohorts should maintain physical distancing from one another as much as possible.

Some residents may only wish to have an in-room visit or otherwise interact with a resident from a different cohort who is fully immunized against COVID-19; homes are expected to help to communicate such wishes amongst residents. Homes are encouraged to find alternatives to assist residents in connecting with other residents when in-person interaction is not possible/appropriate (for example, schedule and set up a videoconference between the two residents).

**Question 15, in the Question & Answer document reads as follows:**

**Question: Can residents from different cohorts socialize with each other?**

**Answer:** Yes, residents can socialize within and across cohorts when indoors and outdoors. Residents should still follow public health measures, especially when indoors, which includes masking (as tolerated) and maintaining physical distancing when possible.

Mixing of cohorts is not permitted when either/both residents are eating or drinking (such as during dining hours); during an outbreak or when a resident(s) is isolating; or when following the direction of a local public health unit which has explicitly prohibited mixing cohorts.

This is a welcomed update for the quality of living for residents. Residents, wearing a mask and keeping physically distanced can resume their relational connections with each other. Specifically:

- Residents can visit with co-residents from other areas of the home whom they've not seen for a very long time
- Residents' Council leaders can welcome new residents to their home
- Residents' Council leaders can move about their home, visiting with residents to gain information and context for residents' issues, challenges, complaints, celebrations; all supporting the effectiveness of Residents' Council meetings and consensus decision making

**Thank You:** Thank you, Ministry of LTC for hearing us and providing this opportunity for residents to build and renew their relationships with each other. The updated guidance document contains information on many other topics including vaccination, screening, absences, visitor policy, communications, staff education and testing.

**Canadian Standards Association (CSA) Surveys: We Need your Input!**

Work on developing a National Standard, known as CSA Z8004, Operation and Infection Prevention and Control of Long-Term Care homes is underway. The CSA group has prepared surveys for residents and family members to fill out, that will inform their technical committee as well, as they continue to craft the standard.

To complete one or both surveys, click the links below and submit by **September 30, 2021**. Both surveys are less than 20 questions in length and ask for your views on design and operations as avenues in supporting your wellbeing (mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual health). Both surveys contain similar questions, however, one is weighted more heavily on diversity, equity and inclusion.

I hope you will take some time, individually and/or supported by a trusted family member or friend, to fill out the surveys. Your experience and opinion matters.

## [CSA Group Long-Term Care Home Standard Operations, Infection Prevention and Control and Design Surveys](#)

### 1. Residents, Families and Caregivers Survey

- On-line Survey Link [English](#) or [French](#)
- Word Version Survey Link\* [English](#) or [French](#)

### 2. Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

- On-line Survey Link [English](#) or [French](#)
- Word Version Survey Link\* [English](#) or [French](#)

\*Word version surveys (paper surveys) can be printed, completed and sent to:

**Cassandra Gullia**, MSc., PMP  
Project Manager, Health and Well-being  
178 Rexdale Blvd  
Toronto, ON, M9W 1R3

**OARC Supporting Residents:** As Executive Director of OARC, I am privileged to function as the Chair for the CSA Resident and Family Centred Care (RFCC) Working Group comprised of close to 20 members (residents and family caregivers) from across Canada. We meet monthly to provide heartfelt advice based on experience living in, and supporting, loved ones in LTC homes. Often the meetings are emotionally charged as members recount stories of successes and challenges they've experienced and witnessed.

Hearing from, listening to, and incorporating resident and family experience into the language and content of the standard is a central focus of this work. **CSA Z8004, aims to provide requirements for safer operating practices and for infection prevention and control in long-term care homes across Canada.**

**Thank you, residents, for sharing your thoughts and experiences with OARC. We are best able to represent your voice because of the trust you have in us to do so. Keep in touch.**

Best wishes,



Dee Lender  
Executive Director, OARC