

December 28, 2021

New Temporary Measures Announced: Effective this Thursday, LTC homes will Pause General Visitors and Day Absences for Residents

Dear Residents, Long-Term Care Team Members and Supportive Partners,

Earlier today, two significant temporary measures were announced by our Minister of Long-Term Care, Rod Phillips, in consultation with the Chief Medical Officer of Health. These include the **pausing of visits from all general visitors** (excluding essential/designated caregivers and those visiting a resident at end of life) and the decision to **disallow daytime/social leaves of absences for residents**. These difficult decisions have been announced by our government as part of their continued effort to keep residents, team members and loved ones safe and to minimize risks associated by the Omicron COVID-19 Variant. **These measures will take effect this Thursday, December 30, 2021 at 12:01am.** You may access the full news release [here](#).

Following the announcement, a memo from Erin Hannah, Associate Deputy Minister, LTC Policy and Pandemic Response, and additional supporting documentation providing clarification and guidance were circulated to LTC homes.

Of particular interest to residents might be the [What Residents Can Expect](#) and [Key Messages to Support Residents and Families](#) documents. Key Messages include several common questions and their corresponding answers:

1. What measures are being implemented?

The following measures will be in effect as of December 30, 2021 at 12:01am:

- Access to long-term care homes by general visitors will be paused, including outdoor visits. General visitors will continue to be permitted to enter the home to visit residents receiving end of life care. Designated caregivers will also continue to be permitted entry.
- Day absences for all residents for social purposes will be paused. All essential, medical or compassionate absences will continue to be permitted.

2. Why are further restrictions being implemented in long-term care homes?

Ontario continues to see a rapid increase in COVID-19 cases in all Public Health Units. The Omicron variant of concern is more transmissible than previous strains which has resulted in high case counts that will likely mean more outbreaks in long-term care homes and more staff being exposed to or contracting COVID-19. The Ministry recognizes the impact these changes will have on the mental and emotional wellbeing of residents and their loved ones and, as such, caregivers will continue to be able to come into long-term care homes. Our [Ministry of Long-Term Care] collective goal is to keep COVID-19 out of homes wherever possible and prevent spread within homes. Ultimately the most important objective is to prevent severe outcomes for residents and staff.

3. How long will these measures be in place?

The Ministry will continue to work closely with the Chief Medical Officer of Health to review policies and monitor available evidence. **At this time, it is anticipated that these additional temporary enhanced measures will be required for at least the next six to eight weeks.**

Ministry Reference and Guidance Documents:

- [AsDM Memo: Additional Measures 2021.12.28](#)
- [COVID-19 Guidance Document for LTC Homes 2021.12.28](#)
- [What Residents Can Expect 2021.12.28](#)
- [LTC Visitors, Absences and Social Gatherings Snapshot 2021.12.28](#)
- [Key Messages to Support Residents and Families 2021.12.28](#)

Next Steps:

The OARC Team encourages LTC Home Leadership teams and Residents' Council leaders to meet as proactively as possible, to disseminate and discuss this new guidance and its implications for residents and their loved ones.

It is also of utmost importance that all team members are informed of these anticipated changes as well as family care partners, to ensure continuity in messaging, and to provide the necessary emotional support and to plan for meaningful and stimulating engagement to soften the heartbreak that will inevitably result from this news. These changes are incredibly stringent and devastating, and they come at a time where morale is already quite low after a holiday season marked by enhanced restrictions that limit contact with grandchildren, friends and family. A second year of cancelled plans and altered traditions has taken a toll on everyone – but especially the residents.

This is a time that requires creative, empathetic, compassionate, and strong solutions-generated conversations. The work done together uniting your Residents' Councils and management team efforts is critical now in brainstorming what can be done. Please reach out to OARC to share what is working, what human resources have been leveraged in supporting robust virtual visits amongst the people who mean so much to you. We acknowledge that while permitting essential caregivers into your homes is a significant improvement from previous waves of COVID-19 community spread and threat of outbreaks, for many residents this remains problematic. When residents have large families, making the choice of two caregivers amongst many important and significant people is difficult.

Consider, through your Residents' Council:

- Thanking your team/staff members for their dedicated service and ongoing commitment to the safety of residents by restricting their exposure within the broader community. i.e., "we rely on you to be healthy, so we can be healthy too." or "You mean the world to us. Please limit your exposure so we can get through this together."
- Plan for a future celebration when COVID-19 restrictions are lifted i.e., Christmas in July, intergenerational parties/Grandparents Day (September)
- Continue to harness technology to stay connected with peers living in different parts of your home through Council meetings and other whole home activities and events such as Birthday Parties, Celebration of Life services, etc.
- Clearly articulate what you need for your wellbeing, record in Council minutes and brainstorm solutions with management team/Administrator
- Share what you need for your wellbeing with OARC - we are here to listen and support you

OARC's Forum for Residents

Residents are welcome to join OARC Resident leaders for a Resident Forum Thursday, December 30th at 2pm. Peer connection, support and sharing is more important now than ever.

How to get connected: Using the Zoom platform on a computer, smart phone or tablet, you can join us using this meeting link:

<https://zoom.us/j/9884879139?pwd=RjdaNmwxTzVLMmk2Wlp1QkVaQ1MxUT09>

Clicking the link should automatically launch you into the Forum waiting room, however, if you are prompted to enter any additional information, you can enter the following:

1. Meeting ID: 988 487 9139
2. Passcode: Resident

To join from a telephone:

1. Dial our toll-free phone-in option 1-888 475 4499
2. Enter our Meeting ID: 988 487 9139
3. Enter our Passcode: 93606329

We are keeping residents, families and LTC teams in our thoughts as we continue to navigate this trajectory of everchanging circumstances.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dee Tripp". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D'.

Dee Tripp (formerly Lender)
OARC Executive Director