

	POLICY
DEPARTMENT: Infection Control	Page: 1 of 8
SUBJECT : Visiting and Resident Absence	
Last reviewed: August 1, 2025	ISSUING AUTHORITY: Professional Practice
Next Review: August 1, 2026	

POLICY:

Braemar respects our resident's right to have visitors of their choosing during regular operations, and access to their essential caregivers during unique circumstances, while also taking all reasonable precautions to ensure the health and safety of our residents, staff, caregivers and visitors in the event of a suspect/confirmed outbreak, during an Epidemic/Pandemic, or upon the direction of Public Health and/or the Ministry of Health in response to a public health threat.

This policy outlines current visiting guidelines for normal operations, as well as during a suspect/confirmed outbreak, it is also a component of our current Pandemic/Epidemic plan. While this policy makes specific reference to COVID-19, as this continues to be an area of focus, this policy and its related procedures may be adjusted due to the most recent Public Health or Ministry of Health guidelines as they pertain to the Long-Term Care sector in respect to COVID19 or in response any other Public Health threat.

This policy is compliant with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Directive and is guided by applicable policies, amended from time to time, from the Ministry of Long-Term Care (MLTC), and the Ministry of Health.

DEFINITIONS:

Antigen: Antigens are molecules capable of stimulating an immune response. Each antigen has distinct surface features resulting in specific responses.

Rapid Antigen Test (RAT): A point-of-care rapid antigen test for the novel coronavirus known as COVID-19.

Rapid Antigen Screening Testing: Provides preliminary COVID-19 results within 15-20 minutes of the time of the test, providing early identification of an individual infected with COVID-19.

Fully immunized individuals against COVID-19:

- They have received the full series of a COVID-19 vaccine or combination of COVID-19 vaccines approved by Health Canada in alignment with current Public Health definition

TYPES OF VISITORS:

Not Considered Visitors

Long-term care home staff (as defined under the Act), volunteers and student placements are not considered visitors as their access to the home is determined by the licensee. Infants under the age of 1 (one) are also not considered visitors as per COVID-19 Ministry Directives, and are excluded from any testing and vaccination requirements.

Essential Visitors

Essential visitors are persons visiting a home to meet an essential need related to the operations of the home or residents that could not be adequately met if the person does not visit the home.

There are four types of essential visitors:

1. People visiting very ill or palliative residents.
2. Government inspectors with a statutory right of entry
3. Support Workers: provide support to the critical operations of the home or to provide essential services to the residents. Examples include but are not limited to:
 - Physicians, and nurse practitioners
 - Emergency services
 - Assistive Devices Program vendors
 - Social work or legal services
 - Maintenance services
 - Food delivery
4. Caregivers: must be at least 16 years of age and is designated by the resident or their substitute decision maker to provide direct care to the resident. Examples of direct care include:
 - Bathing, dressing and eating assistance
 - Assisting with mobility
 - Assisting with personal hygiene
 - Providing cognitive stimulation
 - Fostering successful communication
 - Providing meaningful connection and emotional support

- Offering relational continuity assistant in decision making
- Examples of Caregivers include:

- Family members who provide meaningful connection
- Privately hired caregiver
- Paid companions
- Translator

General Visitors

General visitors are persons who are not essential visitors and are visiting to provide nonessential services related to either the operations of the home or a particular resident.

There are two broad categories of general visitors.

1. Visitors providing non-essential services which include but are not limited to:
 - Hairdressers, barbers, manicurists
 - Entertainers
 - Recreational service providers
 - Animal handlers (Animal Therapy Programs)
 - Individuals who are touring the home
2. Persons visiting for social reasons that the resident or their substitute decision maker assesses as different from “direct care”.

INDOOR VISITS / ACCESS TO FACILITY

SCREENING FOR ENTRY INTO FACILITY:

During normal operations all visitors, regardless of category, must enter through the facility's front entrance. Visitors must self-screen for symptoms of illness prior to entry into the building. Anyone who does not pass any component of screening shall not proceed into the home and should refrain from visiting the home until such time that symptoms have resolved, and in-line with any public health recommendations. Anyone who is aware that they are a known close contact of a current confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19 or respiratory or enteric illness, should alert the charge nurse before visiting the home to determine if it is safe to visit. If a visitor has recently had, or is suspected to have had, COVID-19 themselves they should not visit the home until after 10 days from onset or a positive test result.

During a confirmed or suspected outbreak (of any type) visiting may be restricted to allow only those who meet the definition of Essential Visitors. Additional screening and testing requirements may be required of essential visitors in the event of an outbreak in alignment with Braemar's outbreak

policies and procedures, Ministry of Health guidelines and/or Public Health recommendations.

The home reserves the right to restrict the number of visitors at any time for the safety and wellbeing of our residents and staff, and if required by Ministry of Health guidelines or Public Health recommendations. This includes the number of Essential visitors.

Exemption: First responders' must be permitted entry without screening in emergency situations.

TESTING:

Under normal operations COVID-19 testing is not required for visitors. Symptomatic visitors and those with confirmed/suspected COVID-19 are to refrain from visiting the home for 10 days from onset.

In the event of a COVID-19 outbreak Essential Visitors may be required undergo RAPID antigen testing, including awaiting final results, prior to each entry as a measure to prevent further introduction or spread of COVID-19. In alignment with current Public Health directive. Verbal attestations will not be accepted as proof of RAPID Antigen testing.

Exemptions may include:

- **Confirmed COVID-19:** any individual who has had a confirmed COVID-19 infection in the past 30 days should not be re-tested with the exception of experiencing new signs or symptoms. Adequate proof must be provided to the home of a positive COVID-19 within the last 30 day period for this exemption to apply.
- **Palliative and Emergency Situations:** Support Workers, Caregivers and General Visitors may be exempt from waiting for test results prior to entry in emergency or imminent palliative situations.
- **Inspectors:** This policy does not apply to inspectors with a statutory right of entry.
- **Infants:** infants under one year of age are exempt from testing requirements

VACCINATION REQUIREMENTS:

General Visitors:

Under normal circumstances all general visitors, regardless of vaccination status, who pass all screening requirements prior to entry are able to

access the facility, including common areas of the home. General visitors, regardless of vaccination status, will not be permitted in the home during outbreak/suspect outbreak.

General visitors are expected to abide by all masking requirements and any additional recommended Public Health Measures at all times while visiting the home.

Essential Caregivers:

Due to the extension of their role within the home and the provision that they be permitted entry into the home in an outbreak/suspect outbreak situation it is the expectation of Braemar that all essential caregivers be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 (see definition of fully vaccinated).

Essential Caregivers are expected to abide by all masking requirements and any additional recommended Public Health Measures at all times while visiting the home. Exemptions:

- Palliative and Emergency Situations: Support Workers, Caregivers and General Visitors are exempt from vaccination requirements for entry in qualifying emergency or palliative situations. Some limitations to timing and location of visits may apply.
- Inspectors: This policy does not apply to inspectors with a statutory right of entry.
- Medical Exemption: Anyone who is able to provide proof of valid medical exemption, within the criteria provided by the Ministry of Health, provided by a medical doctor

External Contractors / Delivery / Maintenance providers:

In the event of an outbreak/suspect outbreak external contractors/delivery/maintenance providers may be required to make efforts to advise the home ahead of their expected time of arrival, identify areas within the home they will need access to and estimate the expected duration of time access is required. This allows the home the ability to reduce the spread.

External contractors/delivery/maintenance providers are expected to abide by all masking requirements and any additional recommended Public Health Measures at all times while visiting the home.

MASKING REQUIREMENTS:

Braemar supports a mask-friendly environment. A medical grade mask will be provided by the home to any individuals entering the building. Under usual operations masks are optional, but not required, unless the individual

who is being visited has specialized PPE Requirements. Any individual (staff/visitor etc.) is welcome to continue masking beyond the minimum requirements at any time in an effort to ensure all who enter Braemar can do so within their own comfort level.

Staff do have some additional requirements/considerations for masking in specific situations, as outlined by the home's infection control policies.

In-line with Resident's Rights, if a resident or substitute decision maker would prefer that staff continue wear a mask while providing care for that individual this may be accommodated as appropriate.

It is the expectation that everyone's masking decisions, within the guidelines of this and any other related policies, and infection control requirements, will be respected within the home.

If the home enters into a suspect/confirmed outbreak situation general visit may be suspended and anyone entering the home as an essential caregiver will be required to abide by the masking guidelines as part of the outbreak response (direction will be provided by the Outbreak Management Team and/or Public Health depending on type and location of outbreak).

EXEMPTIONS:

- Children under 2 years of age are exempt from masking requirements.
- Medical Exemption: Anyone who is able to provide valid proof medical exemption provided by a medical doctor

FACILITY IN OUTBREAK:

If the facility is placed into outbreak status by our Public Health Unit, or otherwise is determined to meet the definition of outbreak status, regardless of infectious agent/ type of outbreak, all general visits (indoor and outdoor) will cease as appropriate for the duration of the outbreak or until direction from Public Health is provided to resume general visits in full or in part.

In the event of an outbreak, those registered as Essential Caregivers may continue to access the home following all screening and testing measures as applicable. Restrictions may be put into place regarding particulars of the visits for essential caregivers based on the nature of the outbreak, affected areas and the advice of Public Health. Examples of potential restrictions may include restricted access to common areas or the

requirement of additional personal protective equipment. It is imperative that those entering the home as essential caregivers consider the risk to their own health and safety, and that of any external contacts, when determining if they should attend the home during an active outbreak.

RESIDENT VISITS OUTSIDE OF THE HOME / LEAVE OF ABSENCE IN THE EVENT OF SUSPECTED/ UNCONFIRMED OUTBREAKS.

Absences(If appropriate)

For all absences residents will be:

- Provided with a medical mask when they are leaving the home if appropriate/requested,
- Provided a handout that reminds residents and families to practice public health measures such as physical distancing and hand hygiene when outside of the home as appropriate/requested.
- Encouraged to limit contact with others who are experiencing symptoms of illness, or who have been identified as having been in contact with known/suspected cases of covid-19 within the 10 days prior to contact with the resident.
- Those assuming responsibility for a resident during an absence should be aware of the plan of care for that resident, as applicable for the duration of the absence.

Types of Absence:

1. Medical: Absences to seek medical and/or health care.

- Medical absences are permitted for all residents regardless of vaccination status.
- Braemar recommends that all current public health guidelines will be followed during the course of the absence
- Restrictions may exist for non-urgent medical appointments if the home, or part of, is in outbreak and/or the resident who wishes to leave the home is required to isolate

2. Compassionate/Palliative: Absences which include, but are not limited to, the purpose of visiting a dying loved one.

- Compassionate/Palliative absences are permitted for all residents regardless of vaccination status
- Braemar recommends that all current public health guidelines will be followed during the course of the absence.
- Restrictions may exist if the home, or part of, is on outbreak and/or the resident who wishes to leave the home is required to isolate.

3. Short Term (Day) Absence: Absences that are less than or equal to 24hours in duration.

- Short term absences are permitted for all residents regardless of vaccination status.

- Braemar recommends that all current public health guidelines be followed during the course of the absence.
 - Restrictions may exist if the home, or part of, is on outbreak and/or the resident who wishes to leave the home is required to isolate.
4. **Temporary Absence:** Absences involving two or more days and one or more nights for nonmedical reasons.
- Temporary absences are permitted for all residents regardless of vaccination status.
 - Braemar recommends that all public health guidelines will be followed during the course of the absence
 - Restrictions may exist if the home, or part of, is on outbreak and/or the resident who wishes to leave the home is required to isolate

References:

Ministry of Health (June 26, 2023). COVID-19 Guidance: Long-Term Care Homes, Retirement Homes, and Other Congregate Living Settings for Public Health Units. Version 11