

# Visitation Restrictions in Long-Term Care: Cross-Canada Comparison

## Federal Guidance - PHAC

- Federal Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) guidelines encourage limiting long term care visits to essential visits only (see [link](#)). In particular, as noted based on public health direction or local or regional status of COVID-19 cases it may be necessary to prohibit visitors.
- A "no visitor" policy should be strongly considered. If visitors are permitted, they should be strictly limited to those who are essential, meaning necessary to basic personal care (e.g. feeding), medical (e.g. phlebotomy) or compassionate (e.g. end of life) resident care. Essential visitors should be limited to one person at a time for each resident.

## British Columbia

- On March 17, 2020 BC.. restricted visitors in long-term care to essential visits only (excluding, for example, immediate family members and the spiritual adviser of residents who are clinically assessed to be at the end of their lives).
  - Essential visits include compassionate visits for end-of-life care and for families who routinely visit to provide assistance with feeding or mobility. Health authorities also suspended transfers of individuals from one care home to another, except in circumstances of intolerable risk, and temporarily suspending all adult day programs and in-facility respite care, except in circumstances of intolerable risk and for those who require end-of-life care (see [link](#)). For medical order click [here](#).
- As outlined in late April B.C.'s Public Health Officer hopes to ease COVID-19 restrictions on visitors at seniors' residences and hospitals this summer, allowing at least one family member to visit a loved one (see [link](#)).

## Quebec

- On March 12, 2020 Quebec introduced measures for screening visitors in nursing homes and long-term care centres. Security personnel at the reception desks at the entrance to long-term care centres would be screening all visitors by asking people who wish to visit if they have symptoms of a respiratory infection, whether they have travelled during the past 14 days to countries with COVID-19 travel advisories or been in contact with someone with a confirmed case - those who answer yes will not be allowed in to facilities (see [link](#)).
- On March 14, 2020 Quebec Premier François Legault requested that all people aged 70 years or older to not leave their homes, in a bid to protect them from contracting COVID-19. All visits to seniors residences, hospitals and long-term care centres were also banned (see [link](#)). For further info see following [link](#) (in French).
- In early April the Quebec government announced families will be allowed to move their parents and grandparents out of long-term care and seniors' residences if they feel such places are no longer a safe place to live (see [link](#)).
- In early May Quebec Premier François Legault, Seniors Minister Marguerite Blais and Quebec director of public health Horacio Arruda announced the gradual easing of restrictions on private seniors' residences. Starting May 11, seniors in private residences - as opposed to government-run long-term care facilities, or CHSLDs - will be allowed visitors, who had been barred from such residences since March 23rd (see [link](#)).

## **Ontario**

- On March 15, 2020 Ontario's top public health doctor deemed that only "essential" visitors be allowed in long-term care, retirement, and supportive housing as part of the province's effort to quell the spread of the novel coronavirus. The Ministry of Health's definition of "essential" is restricted to family of dying or very ill person, or the parent of a child or youth in a treatment setting (see [link](#)). For further info see [link](#).

- On March 24, 2020 residents of long-term care homes will no longer be able to leave their facilities to visit friends or family, Ontario health officials stated. The directive is meant to help curb the spread of COVID-19 by limiting contact with those outside the homes (see [link](#)).
- In late April Ottawa began asking families to stop visiting their loved ones at windows to help ensure that physical distancing remains in place for all our residents. (see [link](#)). This directive or order was later discontinued. About a week later the city, however, announced a new policy to allow families to “schedule window visits” with loved ones (see [link](#)).

## **Alberta**

- On March 15, 2020 Alberta introduced visitation limits to continuing care and long-term care facilities. Only essential visits to any continuing care or long-term care facility in Alberta are recommended: Individuals over 60 years of age and those with pre-existing health conditions are most at risk of severe symptoms from COVID-19 and Families and friends of those in these facilities are asked to think of other ways besides visiting that they can support and encourage their loved ones through this difficult time (see [link](#)). For medical order, click [here](#).
- On April 6, 2020 Alberta announced it is banning all visitors from care facilities. The ban includes long-term care centres, licensed group homes and other facilities across the province, as well as residential addiction treatment operators. The amended public health order does make an exception for visitors in instances where the person in care is dying, or if the visitor is essential in delivering care that cannot be handled by staff. Under these circumstances, only one visitor will be allowed at a time and they must wear a face mask and undergo health screening before entering the building (see [link](#)).
- On April 29, 2020 the government announced residents of Alberta long-term care facilities who are not in self-isolation are now allowed outdoor visits with a designated essential visitor and one other person (see [link](#)).

## **Manitoba and Saskatchewan**

- On March 17, 2020 MB issued order to restrict visitors to essential visits only (see [link](#)).
- Saskatchewan had also announced similar restrictions on March 26, 2020.

## **Atlantic Canada**

- New Brunswick issued guidance limiting to essential visits on April 14 (see [link](#)).
- Newfoundland issued guidance on essential visits in order issued March 23<sup>rd</sup> (see [link](#)).
- PEI issued similar restrictions on March 15 (see [link](#)).
- On March 22, 2020 Nova Scotia issued order to limit to essential visits (see [link](#)).