

# Retirement Homes Policy to Implement Directive #3

Release Date: May 4, 2021  
Effective Date: May 5, 2021



## 1.0 Introduction

COVID-19 [Directive #3 for Long-Term Care Homes](#) (Directive #3) issued by the Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH) establishes requirements for retirement homes to ensure the health and safety of its residents and staff during the COVID-19 pandemic. One requirement is that homes have operational policies and procedures in place for visitors, absences, and activities that are compliant with Directive #3 and guided by the policies from the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility (MSAA) and the Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority (RHRA). If anything in this policy conflicts with guidance, recommendations, or advice from the CMOH, the CMOH guidance prevails, and retirement homes must take all reasonable steps to follow them.

This policy supports retirement homes in implementing the requirements set out in Directive #3 and is effective on May 5, 2021. All previous versions of this policy (formerly the Retirement Homes Visiting Policy) are revoked and replaced with this version. Homes must take all reasonable steps to ensure their visiting policy is guided by this policy.

This update provides measures that take into consideration the context of high immunization rates achieved in retirement homes. These measures will be updated periodically as the Province and public health experts continue to monitor evolving evidence on COVID-19 vaccine effectiveness, the third wave and subsequent waves of the pandemic, and the increasing variants of concern in Ontario. For the purposes of this document, an individual is considered fully immunized when they have received the total number of required doses of a vaccine approved by Health Canada and it has been at least 14 days since they received their final dose.

Additionally, this policy supplements any additional requirements under the [COVID-19 Response Framework: Keeping Ontario Safe and Open](#) (Provincial Framework), or those resulting from a stay at home order or emergency brake. The requirements of the Provincial Framework are set out in the *Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act, 2020* and the regulations made under that Act.

If anything in this policy conflicts with applicable legislation or regulations or any other requirements outlined in the Provincial Framework, those requirements prevail, and retirement homes must follow all applicable provincial legislation, regulations and requirements.

## 2.0 Guiding Principles

Protection of retirement home residents and staff from the risk of COVID-19 is paramount. Guidance for retirement homes is in place to protect the health and safety of residents, staff, and visitors, while supporting residents in receiving the care they need and in consideration of their mental health and emotional well-being.

This guidance is in addition to the requirements established in the *Retirement Homes Act, 2010* and its regulation (O. Reg 166/11), and the Provincial Framework and Directive #3 noted above. It is guided by the following principles:

- **Safety:** Any approach to visiting, absences, and activities must balance the health and safety needs of residents, staff, and visitors, and ensure risks of infection are mitigated.
- **Mental Health and Emotional Well-being:** Allowing visitors, absences, and activities is intended to support the overall physical, mental and emotional well-being of residents by reducing any potential negative impacts related to social isolation.
- **Equitable Access:** All residents must be given equitable access to receive visitors and participate in activities consistent with their preferences and within restrictions that safeguard residents, staff and visitors.
- **Flexibility:** The physical characteristics/infrastructure of the home, its staffing availability, whether the home is in an outbreak or in an area of widespread community transmission, and the current status of the home with respect to infection prevention and control (IPAC) including personal protective equipment (PPE) are all variables to consider when administering home-specific policies for visiting, absences, and activities.

- **Autonomy:** Residents have the right to choose their visitors. Residents also have the right to designate their caregivers. If a resident is unable to do so, substitute decision-maker(s) may designate caregivers.
- **Visitor Responsibility:** Visitors have a crucial role to play in reducing the risk of infection for the safety of residents and staff by adhering to requirements related to screening, IPAC, PPE, and any precautions described in this policy or the visitor policy of the home.
- **Immunization:** Flexibilities for absences and activities reflect both the high rates of COVID-19 immunization as well as the protective effect that immunizations have had on the number of COVID-19 cases and outbreaks in retirement homes. This update reflects the evidence available so far across Canada and abroad and are subject to change as the knowledge of COVID-19 vaccines evolves.

### 3.0 Requirements for Visits

Retirement homes are responsible for ensuring residents receive visitors safely to help protect them against the risk of COVID-19. Homes are also responsible for establishing and implementing visiting practices that comply with applicable legislation and regulations including those referenced in the Provincial Framework, the guidance, recommendations, and advice of the CMOH, Directive #3, and ensuring that such visiting practices align with the requirements in this document.

In co-located long-term care and retirement homes that are not physically and operationally independent<sup>1</sup>, the policies for the long-term care home and the retirement home should align where possible or follow the more restrictive requirements, unless otherwise instructed by the local Public Health Unit based on their instructions for COVID-19 prevention and containment.

<sup>1</sup> Operationally and physically independent meaning that there are separate entrances and no mixing of residents or staff between the retirement home and the long-term care home.

In cases of spouses or immediate family members living in separate 'homes' of a co-located home (e.g., one spouse lives in a retirement home, while the other lives in a long-term care home that is on the same property), the visiting member must follow the requirements of the home they are visiting, based on whether the visitor is a General Visitor or a designated Essential Caregiver. Wherever possible, it is recommended that spouses or immediate family members be designated as an Essential Caregiver to facilitate visits with partners and immediate family.

Homes must adhere to the requirements in any applicable directives issued by the CMOH and directions from their local PHU. This may include direction to take additional measures to restrict access and duration of visits during an outbreak or when the PHU deems it necessary under the [Provincial Framework](#). Homes must maintain the following baseline requirements to continue to accept any visitors:

- Procedures for visits including but not limited to IPAC, scheduling and any setting-specific policies.
- Communication of clear visiting procedures with residents, families, visitors and staff. This process must include sharing an information package with visitors on IPAC, masking, physical distancing and other health and safety procedures such as limiting movement around the home, if applicable, and ensuring visitors' agreement to comply with visiting procedures. Home materials must include an expectation that visitors comply with visiting policies.
- A process for any person to make complaints to the home about the administration of visiting policies and a timely process for resolution. The information package for visitors must include this Retirement Home Policy to Implement Directive #3 (e.g., a digital link, or a copy upon request). The information package must also include information about how to escalate concerns about homes to the RHRA via the RHRA email address and/or phone number.

- Homes' policies/procedures must include an expectation that visitors comply with visiting policies and a process to notify residents and visitors that failure to comply with their visiting policies may result in discontinuation of visit(s) when risk of harm from continual non-compliance is considered too high. This must include a way to assess refusal of entry on a case-by-case basis.
- Protocols for record keeping of visitations for contact tracing purposes, to be kept for at least 30 days in accordance with Directive #3 (minimum requirements: name, contact information, date and time of visit, resident visited).
- Dedicated areas for both indoor and outdoor visits to support physical distancing between residents and visitors.
- Protocols to maintain best practices for IPAC measures prior to, during and after visits.
- A list of visitors available for relevant staff to access, including Essential Visitors, to support contact tracing.

Factors that will inform decisions about visits in retirement homes include:

- **Adequate staffing:** The home has sufficient staff to implement the policies related to visitors and to ensure safe visiting as determined by the home's leadership.
- **Access to adequate testing:** The home has a testing policy and plan in place, based on contingencies and informed by local and provincial health officials, for testing in the event of a suspected outbreak.
- **Access to adequate PPE:** The home has adequate supplies of PPE required to support visits.
- **IPAC standards:** The home has appropriate cleaning and disinfection supplies and adheres to IPAC standards, including enhanced cleaning.
- **Physical Distancing:** The home can facilitate visits in a manner aligned with physical distancing protocols.

Homes that restrict visits based on these factors are expected to communicate that decision to residents and provide the reasons for the decision.

### **3.1 Types of Visitors**

There are three categories of visitors: Essential Visitors, General Visitors, and Personal Care Service Providers.

#### **3.1.1 Not Considered Visitors**

Retirement home staff and volunteers as defined in the *Retirement Homes Act, 2010*<sup>2</sup> are not considered visitors.

#### **3.1.2 Essential Visitors**

Directive #3 indicates that Essential Visitors are persons performing essential support services (e.g., food delivery, inspectors, maintenance, or health care services (e.g., phlebotomy) or a person visiting a very ill or palliative resident). In addition to a person visiting a very ill or palliative resident, there are two categories of Essential Visitors: Support Workers and Essential Caregivers.

##### **a) Support Workers**

A Support Worker is a type of Essential Visitor who is brought into the home to perform essential services for the home or for a resident in the home, including the following individuals:

- Regulated health care professionals under the *Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991* (e.g., physicians, nurses);
- Unregulated health care workers (e.g., personal support workers, personal/support aides, nursing/personal care attendants), including external care providers and Home and Community Care Support Service Providers (formerly LHIN providers);
- Authorized third parties who accommodate the needs of a resident with a disability;
- Health and safety workers, including IPAC specialists;

<sup>2</sup> "Volunteer": in relation to a retirement home, means a person who works in or supplies services to the home, but who is not part of the staff of the home and who does not receive a wage or salary for the services or work that the person provides in the home.

- Maintenance workers;
- Private housekeepers;
- Inspectors; and
- Food delivery.

Licensees are reminded to minimize unnecessary entry into the home. For example, licensees should encourage food or package delivery to the foyer for resident pick up or staff delivery.

### **b) Essential Caregiver**

An Essential Caregiver is a type of Essential Visitor who is designated by the resident or, if the resident is unable to do so, their substitute decision-maker.

Essential Caregivers visit to provide care to a resident. This includes supporting feeding, mobility, personal hygiene, cognitive stimulation, communication, meaningful connection, relational continuity and assistance in decision-making.

A maximum of two (2) Essential Caregivers may be designated per resident. The designation should be made in writing to the home. Residents or a substitute decision maker are able to designate the Essential Caregiver and the necessity of an Essential Caregiver is determined by the resident or substitute decision maker. Homes should have a procedure for documenting Essential Caregiver designations and any subsequent changes.

In order to limit infection spread, a resident and/or their substitute decision-maker should be encouraged to change the designation of their Essential Caregiver in limited circumstances, including in response to:

- A change in the resident's care needs that is reflected in the plan of care; and/or
- A change in the availability of a designated Essential Caregiver, either temporary (e.g., illness) or permanent.

Examples of Essential Caregivers include family members who provide care, a privately hired caregiver, paid companions, and translators. A resident may designate an external care provider as an Essential Caregiver even though that individual would also be considered a Support Worker.

### **3.1.3 General Visitor**

A General Visitor is a person who is not an Essential Visitor and visits:

- To provide non-essential services (may or may not be hired by the home or the resident and/or their substitute decision-maker);
- For social reasons (e.g., family members or friends); and/or
- A prospective resident taking a tour of the home.

### **3.1.4 Personal Care Service Providers**

A Personal Care Service Provider is a person who is not an Essential Visitor and visits to provide non-essential personal services to residents.

Personal Care Services include those outlined under the *Reopening Ontario Act, 2020* regulations [O. Reg. 82/20](#), [O. Reg. 263/20](#) and [O. Reg. 364/20](#), such as hair salons and barbershops, manicure and pedicure salons, aesthetician services, and spas, that are not being provided for medical or essential reasons (e.g., foot care to support mobility or reduce infections).

## **3.2 Access to Homes**

Directive #3 requires that all visitors to the home follow public health measures (e.g., active screening, physical distancing, hand hygiene, and masking for source control) for the duration of their visit in the home.

Local PHUs may also advise further restrictions on visitors in part or all of the home, depending on the specific situation. The home and visitors must abide by any restrictions imposed by a PHU.

**Please note:** Residents who are self-isolating under Contact and Droplet Precautions may only receive Essential Visitors (e.g., residents may not receive General Visitors or Personal Care Service Providers).

Homes may permit other residents within the home who are not self-isolating to receive General Visitors and Personal Care Service Providers, provided this is in alignment with this policy, the [Provincial Framework](#) and directions from the local PHU.

### 3.2.1 Essential Visitors

Visits by Essential Visitors are permitted as follows, subject to direction as outlined in this policy:

#### a) Support Workers

- Any number of Support Workers are permitted into the home, while maintaining the principles of minimizing the number of workers per resident per day and maintaining physical distancing within the home as much as possible.

#### b) Essential Caregivers

- A maximum of 2 Essential Caregivers per resident may visit at a time, with physical distancing, appropriate PPE, and other public health measures.

### 3.2.2 General Visitors

A maximum of 2 General Visitors per resident may visit at a time provided:

- The home is **NOT** in a PHU region in the Orange (Restrict), Red (Control), Grey (Lockdown) or Shutdown zone,
- The home is **NOT** in an outbreak, and
- The resident is **NOT** self-isolating or symptomatic.

Homes should ensure that residents are able to maintain contact with their loved ones (e.g., phone and virtual visits) when in a PHU region in the Orange (Restrict), Red (Control), Grey (Lockdown) or Shutdown zone, during an outbreak or when the resident is self-isolating.

### 3.2.3 Personal Care Service Providers

Personal Care Service Providers who are visiting or work on site are permitted to provide services in alignment with the [Provincial Framework](#).

Personal Care Service Providers must:

- Follow required public health and IPAC measures for Personal Care Service Providers and those of the home, including wearing a medical mask and eye protection for the duration of their visit to the home, practicing hand hygiene and conducting environmental cleaning after each appointment.
- Require residents to wear a medical mask during their services.
- Document all residents served and maintain this list for at least 30 days to support contact tracing.
- Not perform any services which require the removal of face coverings.

## 3.3 Screening Visitors for COVID-19

### 3.3.1 Testing

Staff and Essential Visitors must follow testing requirements outlined in [COVID-19 Testing in Retirement Homes](#). These requirements also apply to Home and Community Care Support Service Providers and Personal Care Service Providers.

### 3.3.2 Active Screening

All visitors must be actively screened on entry according to the requirements outlined under Directive #3. The Ministry of Health's [COVID-19 Guidance: Long-Term Care Homes and Retirement Homes for PHUs](#) provides a summary chart of screening practices.

Visitors are not permitted access if they do not pass screening; however, homes should have a protocol in place that assesses entry on a case-by-case basis which includes the assurance that resident care can be maintained if entry is refused.

Exemptions include first responders, visitors for imminently palliative residents and staff with post-vaccination symptoms, who are not required pass screening as outlined in Directive #3.

Homes should document entry of all persons to the home and their screening results. Documentation must be retained for at least 30 days to support contact tracing. This should include screening results based on the requirements under Directive #3 and the safety review outlined below in Sections 3.3.3 and 3.3.4.

### **3.3.3 Safety Review – Essential Visitors**

Prior to visiting any resident in a home declared in outbreak for the first time, the home should provide training to Essential Caregivers and Support Workers who are not trained as part of their service provision or through their employment. Training must address how to safely provide direct care, including putting on (donning) and taking off (doffing) required PPE, and hand hygiene. Alternatively, if the home does not provide the training, it must direct Essential Caregivers and Support Workers to appropriate resources from [Public Health Ontario](#) to acquire this training.

For homes not in outbreak, prior to visiting any resident for the first time, and at least once every month thereafter, homes must ask Essential Caregivers and Support Workers to verbally attest to the home that they have:

- Read/Re-Read the following documents:
  - The home's visitor policy; and
  - Public Health Ontario's document entitled [Recommended Steps: Putting on Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\)](#).
- Watched/Re-watched the following Public Health Ontario videos:
  - [Putting on Full Personal Protective Equipment](#);
  - [Taking off Full Personal Protective Equipment](#); and
  - [How to Hand Wash](#).

### 3.3.4 Safety Review – General Visitor and Personal Care Service Provider

Prior to visiting any resident for the first time, and at least once every month thereafter, homes should ask General Visitors and Personal Care Service Providers to verbally attest to the home that they have:

- Read/Re-Read the following documents:
  - The home's visitor policy; and
  - Public Health Ontario's document entitled [\*Recommended Steps: Putting on Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\)\*](#).
- Watched/Re-watched the following Public Health Ontario videos:
  - [Putting on Full Personal Protective Equipment](#);
  - [Taking off Full Personal Protective Equipment](#); and
  - [How to Hand Wash](#).

### 3.4 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Visitors must wear PPE as required in Directive #3, which requires retirement homes to follow [Directive #5 for Hospitals and Long-Term Care Homes](#).

#### 3.4.1 Essential Visitors

Support Workers are responsible for bringing their own PPE to comply with requirements for Essential Visitors as outlined in Directive #3. Retirement homes should provide access to PPE to Essential Caregivers if they are unable to acquire PPE independently. This should include providing access to medical masks (surgical/procedure), face shields or eye goggles and any additional PPE required to maintain Contact and Droplet Precautions when providing care to residents who are isolating on Droplet and Contact Precautions.

Directive #3 notes that Essential Visitors:

- Must use a medical mask (surgical/procedure) while in the home, including while visiting a resident who does not have, or is not suspected to have COVID-19 in their room (the resident should also wear a mask, if tolerated).
- Must wear appropriate eye protection (e.g., goggles or face shield) when they are within 2 metres of a resident as part of the provision of direct care and/or their interaction with the resident in an indoor area.
- That are health care workers providing direct care or in contact with a resident who is suspected or confirmed with COVID-19 must wear appropriate PPE in accordance with [Directive #5](#). For a summary of requirements, please see [IPAC Recommendations for Use of PPE for Care of Individuals with Suspect or Confirmed COVID-19](#).

Homes should reinforce appropriate use of PPE for Essential Visitors as outlined in Directive #5. Essential Visitors must attest to having received training on proper use of PPE, as noted above. Homes must intervene and reinforce appropriate uses of PPE if improper practices are alleged or observed. Essential Visitors must also follow staff reminders and coaching on proper use of PPE.

### **3.4.2 General Visitors and Personal Care Service Providers**

General Visitors and Personal Care Service Providers are responsible for bringing their own mask for visits as outlined in Directive #3.

Visitors must wear either a medical or a non-medical if the visit is outdoors. If the visit is indoors, a medical mask (surgical/procedure) must be worn at all times.

General Visitors and Personal Care Service Providers must attest to having read the documents and watched the videos on PPE, as described in Section 3.3.4. Homes must intervene and reinforce appropriate uses of PPE if improper practices are alleged or observed. General Visitors must also follow staff reminders and coaching on proper use of PPE.

## 4.0 Requirements for Absences

For all types of absences, residents must be provided with a medical mask free of charge if they are unable to source one and reminded to practice public health measures, such as physical distancing and hand hygiene, while they are away from the home. Additionally, all residents on an absence, regardless of type or duration of the absence, must be actively screened upon their return to the home.

### 4.1 Types of Absences

There are four types of absences:

1. **Medical absences** – are absences to seek medical and/or health care.
2. **Compassionate/palliative absences** – are absences that include, but are not limited to, absences for the purposes of visiting a dying loved one.
3. **Short term (day) absences** – can be split into:
  - **Essential outings** – absences for reasons of groceries, pharmacies, and outdoor physical activity; and
  - **Social outings** – absences other than for medical, compassionate/palliative, or essential outings that do not include an overnight stay outside of the home.
4. **Temporary (overnight) absences** refer to absences that involve two or more days and one or more nights away from the home for non-medical purposes.

### 4.2 Absence Requirements

In alignment with [Directive #3](#), absences that are permitted at all times irrespective of immunization status include:

- A resident going for a walk either on or off the premises of the property belonging to the home.
- Medical or compassionate / palliative absences.
- Essential outings.

Homes cannot restrict or deny outings for medical, compassionate/palliative or essential reasons at any time. These absences are also the only type of absences that are permitted when:

- A resident is in isolation on Droplet and Contact Precautions (due to symptoms, exposure, and/or diagnosis of COVID-19);
- A resident has been newly admitted/readmitted to the home and is in isolation;
- A home is in an outbreak; and/or
- During times of local/provincial restrictions (e.g., stay at home order).

In these situations, homes must consult local PHU for further advice.

The table below outlines requirements for short term (day) absences and temporary (overnight) absences.

Types of Absences	Fully Immunized Resident <sup>3</sup>	Partially Immunized or Unimmunized Resident <sup>4</sup>
<b>Short-term (day) absence - Essential outing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Permitted in all COVID-19 zones even when local/provincial restrictions are in place</li> <li>• Active screening on return</li> <li>• Testing or self-isolation not required</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Permitted in all COVID-19 zones even when local/provincial restrictions are in place</li> <li>• Active screening on return</li> <li>• Testing or self-isolation not required</li> </ul>
<b>Short-term (day) absence - Social outing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Permitted in Green, Yellow, Orange, and Red zones</li> <li>• Active screening on return</li> <li>• Testing or self-isolation not required</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Permitted in Green and Yellow zones</li> <li>• Active screening on return</li> <li>• Testing or self-isolation not required</li> </ul>

<sup>3</sup> Fully immunized means a person has received the total number of required doses of a vaccine approved by Health Canada and it has been at least 14 days since they received their final dose.

<sup>4</sup> Partially immunized means a person has not received the total number of required doses of a vaccine approved by Health Canada and/or it has not been at least 14 days since they received their final dose.

Types of Absences	Fully Immunized Resident <sup>3</sup>	Partially Immunized or Unimmunized Resident <sup>4</sup>
Temporary (overnight) absence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Permitted in Green, Yellow, Orange, and Red zones</li> <li>See "Section 5.0 Admissions and Transfers" for testing and self-isolation requirements upon return</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Permitted in Green, Yellow, Orange, and Red zones</li> <li>See "Section 5.0 Admissions and Transfers" for testing and self-isolation requirements upon return</li> </ul>

## 5.0 Requirements for Admissions and Transfers

Homes must have policies and procedures to accept new admissions, as well as transfers of residents from other health care facilities back to the home, in a way that balances the dignity of the resident against the overall health and safety to the home's staff and residents.

- For **fully immunized residents**: a lab-based PCR test is required at time of admission/transfer. The individual must be placed in isolation on Droplet and Contact Precautions if their test result is pending due to an unavoidable delay. If their test result is negative, isolation on Droplet and Contact Precautions can be discontinued.
- For **partially immunized or unimmunized residents**: a lab-based PCR test is required at time of admission/transfer, and the resident must be placed in isolation on Droplet and Contact Precautions for a minimum of 10 days. A second negative lab-based PCR test result collected on day 8 is required to discontinue isolation on Droplet and Contact Precautions on day 10. If this second test is not obtained, isolation on Droplet and Contact Precautions must be maintained until day 14.

<sup>3</sup> Fully immunized means a person has received the total number of required doses of a vaccine approved by Health Canada and it has been at least 14 days since they received their final dose.

<sup>4</sup> Partially immunized means a person has not received the total number of required doses of a vaccine approved by Health Canada and/or it has not been at least 14 days since they received their final dose.

- Exception for **recently recovered residents**: individuals who are within 90 days (from the date the test was taken) from a prior lab-confirmed COVID-19 infection and have recently recovered are not required to be tested or placed in isolation on Droplet and Contact precautions on admission/transfer.

For more details on requirements for admissions and transfers, please refer to Directive #3.

## **6.0 Requirements for Social Gatherings, Dining, and Recreational Services**

For this section, different requirements apply depending on the immunization rate of a home. The immunization rate refers to the percentage of residents who are fully immunized and the percentage of staff (for this section, staff means any person who performs work as an employee of the retirement home) who are fully immunized.

For a home to meet the immunization threshold, this requires a home to have:

- A minimum of 85% of all residents fully immunized; **AND**
- A minimum of 70% of the overall home (residents and staff) fully immunized.

This reflects the importance of herd immunity, or the home's overall immunization status, to facilitate the measures described below given the nature of the activity.

### **Calculating Immunization Rates**

Homes must have a process for determining their resident and staff immunization rates, as well as the number and percentage of residents and staff who are fully immunized and partially immunized (as defined under Section 4.0). If this information is not available, the home may determine immunization rates by surveying residents and staff in accordance with existing laws (e.g., Personal Health Information Protection Act). Residents and staff must consent to participating in the home's data collection process for determining immunization rates. Any residents and staff that do not voluntarily disclose this information should be considered unimmunized for the purpose of calculating immunization rates. Residents and staff are encouraged to disclose immunization status.

See the Appendix for additional guidance on Immunization Thresholds.

### 6.1 Social Gatherings and Organized Events

Social gatherings and organized events are permitted in alignment with the [Provincial Framework](#), including activity classes, performances, religious services, movie nights, and other recreational and social activities (e.g., bingo, games).

**To note:** At any time, regardless of the Provincial Framework or a Stay-At-Home order, residents may meet or use a common area of the home, accompanied by usual public health measures, such as masking (as tolerated) and frequent hand hygiene.

For homes in zones under the Provincial Framework that allow social gatherings and organized events, additional flexibility is permitted in homes that meet the immunization threshold established in Section 6.0.

Precautions	Home is Above Immunization Threshold	Home is Below Immunization Threshold
<p><b>Resident Precautions</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resume activities in cohorted groups as outlined in the <a href="#">COVID-19 Guidance: Long-Term Care Homes and Retirement Homes</a></li> <li>• Masking and physical distancing recommended</li> <li>• Continue to avoid high risk activities (e.g., singing, karaoke)</li> </ul>	<p><b>ENHANCED PRECAUTIONS REQUIRED</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited capacity in a room by ability to physically distance in the room</li> <li>• Participants (residents and staff) should physically distance from one another</li> <li>• Masking strongly recommended</li> <li>• Cleaning and disinfection of high touch surfaces between activities/room use</li> <li>• Maintain same activity groups as much as possible</li> </ul>

Precautions	Home is Above Immunization Threshold	Home is Below Immunization Threshold
<b>Staff Precautions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Universal masking/eye protection for workers</li> <li>• Frequent hand hygiene</li> <li>• Maintain physical distancing from residents and other staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Universal masking/eye protection for workers</li> <li>• Frequent hand hygiene</li> <li>• Maintain physical distancing from residents and other staff</li> </ul>

## 6.2 Communal Dining

Additional flexibility is permitted for homes that meet the immunization threshold established in Section 6.0 in all zones of the Provincial Framework.

Precautions	Home is Above Immunization Threshold	Home is Below Immunization Threshold
<b>Resident Precautions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communal dining permitted for cohorted groups</li> <li>• Consistent seating of residents at the same table and physical distancing strongly recommended</li> <li>• Masking when not eating/drinking recommended</li> <li>• Fully immunized essential caregivers may join a fully immunized resident during mealtime</li> </ul>	<p><b>ENHANCED PRECAUTIONS REQUIRED</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communal dining permitted only with physical distancing between diners during meals</li> <li>• Decreased dining room capacity</li> <li>• Consistent seating of residents at the same table, physical distancing and hand hygiene strongly recommended</li> <li>• Masking when not eating/drinking required</li> </ul>
<b>Staff Precautions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Universal masking/eye protection for workers required</li> <li>• No buffet style service</li> <li>• Frequent hand hygiene</li> <li>• Maintain physical distancing from residents (when not serving) and other staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Universal masking/eye protection for workers required</li> <li>• No buffet style service</li> <li>• Frequent hand hygiene</li> <li>• Maintain physical distancing from residents (when not serving) and other staff</li> </ul>

Retirement homes must ensure residents who are experiencing signs and symptoms of COVID-19 do not participate in communal dining, unless the resident has tested negative for COVID-19 since the onset of the signs and symptoms. This must not interfere with providing a meal during the scheduled mealtime to the resident.

### **6.3 Other Recreational Services**

Services provided by the home for residents such as gyms, pools, and spas, must follow requirements for that activity under the Provincial Framework. This includes following public health measures (e.g., maintaining, physical distancing, masking, and cleaning/disinfection between use). Homes must document all residents served and maintain this list for at least 30 days to support contact tracing.

Virtual tours should be implemented as much as possible.

In-person tours are allowed in PHUs in the Green (Prevent), Yellow (Protect), Orange (Restrict) and Red (Control) zones, with strong adherence to IPAC and public health measures and the following precautions:

- The tour group should be limited to the prospective resident or couple plus one other individual (e.g., accompanying family member or close friend).
- All tour participants are subject to the General Visitor screening and PPE requirements outlined in this document (e.g., active screening, wearing a face covering/mask, IPAC, maintaining social distance).
- The tour route must be restricted in a manner that avoids contact with residents.
- Homes should keep the number and duration of tours in the home to a minimum.

All in-person tours should be paused if a home goes into outbreak or is in a PHU under the Grey (Lockdown) or Shutdown zone.

Homes are required to meet all applicable laws such as the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*.

## **7.0 Requirements for Retirement Home Tours**

## **8.0 Accessibility Considerations**

## Appendix – Guidance on Immunization Thresholds

### 1. Immunization Thresholds

The following thresholds must be met for a retirement home to be able to implement the additional flexibilities described in this document:

- A minimum of 85% of all residents fully immunized; AND
- A minimum of 70% of the overall home (residents and staff) **fully immunized\***.

\*This includes residents and staff of the licenced retirement home as defined by the [Retirement Homes Act, 2010](#) (RHA). It does not include essential visitors, third party staff providing services such as Home and Community Care providers, or volunteers. While residents and staff are not required to disclose immunization status, if not disclosed, homes must assume the individual is “unimmunized”.

**“Fully immunized”** means a person has received the total number of required doses of a vaccine approved by Health Canada and it has been at least 14 days since they received their final dose.

### 2. Calculating Immunization Rates

Each retirement home must calculate immunization rates for the following groups:

- A. Residents
- B. Staff
- C. Residents and staff

A record of these rates, including the date they were calculated, must be maintained by the home. Immunization rates must be kept for a period of 30 days. The Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority (RHRA) can request to see these records at any time (on a de-identified basis), including when they are onsite performing inspections.

**Employers must ensure that all information relating to employees' personal information and immunization status is kept confidential and in a secure location.**

### A. How to calculate the resident immunization rate

$$\text{Total Resident Immunization Rate} = \frac{\text{\# fully immunized residents}}{\text{total \# residents in home}} \times 100$$

- All residents of the home must be counted (this includes those currently in the home, on a short-term absence (presumed short stay in a hospital, etc.) as well as prospective residents that will be moving into the home within the next two weeks.
- Some discretion by the home is required to consider not including residents that will be absent for longer periods of time and including them when they return. Rates can be recalculated at any point in time but should be updated every three weeks as per the direction in Section 3 below.

### B. How to calculate the staff immunization rate

$$\text{Total Staff Immunization Rate} = \frac{\text{\# fully immunized staff}}{\text{total \# staff in home}} \times 100$$

- Staff includes all part-time and full-time individuals, and any staff that are not on extended leave (e.g., maternity leave). Staff on extended leave should be included in the updated calculations when they return to work.

### C. How to calculate the retirement home immunization rate

$$\text{Total Home Immunization Rate} = \frac{(\text{\# fully immunized residents}) + (\text{\# fully immunized staff})}{\text{total \# residents and staff in home}} \times 100$$

- For the purposes of calculating the retirement home immunization rate, only the number of residents and the number of staff<sup>5</sup> of the retirement home should be used.

<sup>5</sup> Staff does not include essential visitors (including essential caregivers), third party staff providing services such as Home and Community Care providers, or volunteers.

### 3. Proof of Vaccination

Residents and staff may provide written attestation that they have been fully immunized and the date of their second immunization dose. Residents or staff who are uncertain of the date of their second immunization dose should consult their immunization record (e.g., receipt from immunization) to verify that date.

Residents and staff may also produce their immunization record in place of a written attestation. Any resident or staff that does not provide a written attestation or their immunization record, or has only partial immunization, must be identified as “unimmunized” for the purpose of the threshold.

### 4. Frequency of Updating Rates

It is recommended that immunization rates for residents, staff, and the home be reviewed and updated every three weeks, or sooner if there is a significant influx of new residents or staff turnover. Retirement homes can use discretion for determining what constitutes a significant change.

**NOTE:** If retirement home staff are seeking to be immunized, they may visit the [Ontario vaccine booking site](#) or their local Public Health Unit website to identify opportunities, including pop-up vaccine clinics. Additionally, to facilitate accurate data collection in COVax, staff should identify themselves as retirement home staff and provide the name of the home they work in at the time of their vaccination (for first and second doses).