

PURPOSE

People who use Christian Horizons' services are excited to invite their family and friends over to meet safely while remaining physically distanced. The Ontario Ministry of Children, Community, and Social Services (MCCSS) has established new guidelines that everyone must follow during these visits. Sometimes, essential visits or essential overnight visits are also required for health, wellness and safety, compassionate care, critical maintenance, or any applicable legal rights reasons.

This guide – a combination of previous guidelines and recent updates – helps teams know how to support people through these visits based on MCCSS guidance effective September 9, 2020, [Visitor's Guidelines 2.0: Re-Opening of Congregate Living Settings](#). We will continue to adapt to align with government and public health directions.

FAMILY AND FRIEND VISITS

Connections with families and friends are crucial to people's happiness and wellbeing. While we *foster belonging* using technology where possible, nothing can really replace an in-person visit. We will learn from people who use our services *who* they want to meet with and *how often* those visits might occur, following the guidelines below.

["COVID-19 Visits Social Story"](#) and a ["COVID-19 Visiting Guide for Families or Friends"](#) are available at www.christian-horizons.org/coronavirus to help navigate conversations about visiting. While legislation restricts certain aspects of these visits, the person who uses our services and their family and friends are our priority. We will support each person to visit in a safe and enjoyable environment. We all need to do our part to keep people who use services, families, and Christian Horizons employees safe and healthy.

The following guidelines describe how Christian Horizons will support people and their family and friends in meeting the visitor expectations outlined by MCCSS.

TYPES OF VISITORS:

There are three types of visitors as per MCCSS guidelines: Essential, Designated and Non-Essential:

An **Essential Visitor** is generally someone who *"performs essential services to support the ongoing operation of a service agency (including a contractor)" and/or who is "considered necessary to maintain the health, wellness and safety, or any applicable legal rights, of a congregate living resident."* An essential visitor may include, but is not limited to, a parent/guardian, social service workers, health care providers, and inspectors from MCCSS or public health units. See **Essential Visits** guidelines on Page 3 below.

A **Designated Visitor** is an "unrestricted visitor." Each person who uses services and/or their substitute decision maker can designate up to **two people** as designated visitors. This means these visitors are **not required** to schedule an appointment if the visit is within the support location's permitted visiting hours. Designated visitors may be required to wait outside if the support location is at its maximum visitor capacity. Scheduling appointments in advance is advisable to avoid wait times. Also, in order to visit, the site must not be in outbreak.

A **Non-Essential Visitor** is generally someone who *"provides non-essential services, who may or may not be hired by the site or the resident and/or their substitute decision maker" and/or who visits "for social reasons (e.g., family member or friends."* Appointments **are required** prior to visiting the support location. In order to visit, the site must not be in outbreak.

PREPARING FOR A VISIT:

Program Managers and Team Leads are encouraged to *lead with empathy* and to demonstrate valuing people and their family and friends throughout this process. For further ideas, see the article "[10 Ways to Communicate with Empathy and Authority in Times of Crisis](#)." People will need encouragement and support to focus on the value of the visit and the need to visit in a safe environment.

1) Planning the Visit

- a. Talk/communicate with the person who uses our services to learn what they are looking forward to about the visit. Prepare them for the event using the **COVID-19 Visits Social Story**. Help to set expectations and figure out ways to make the time as enjoyable and meaningful as possible.
- b. Designated and non-essential visits can only take place if the location is not currently experiencing an outbreak. Public Health will determine and declare when a site is no longer in outbreak.
- c. In-person visits can take place at a designated space of the support location, with up to **2 visitors per visit** at a time. Outdoor visits are best where possible due to more continuous airflow.
- d. When planning, it should be confirmed that there will be sufficient employees on shift to support both the visit and ongoing location activities.
- e. Visits are to be planned in advance:
 - Come up with a visitation plan with each person who uses services (i.e., who they want to meet, who are their designated and non-essential visitors, frequency of visits, length of visits, clarify expectations, etc.). Write an overview of this plan, which must then be approved by the Area Manager. Executive Directors (or someone they designate) will keep a copy of the approved plan for each person. You may use the **COVID-19 Visiting Record** to record information about this plan.
 - For scheduled visits (i.e., non-essential and essential visitors), maintain time in-between visits to allow for surfaces to be disinfected.
 - Up to **2 designated visitors** can visit at a time. While designated visitors are not required to pre-book their visits, they are advised to schedule them in advance to avoid wait times in the event that other visitors are present, and the support location cannot accommodate an unannounced visit. Some locations may have certain times where visits are more easily accommodated.
 - The **COVID-19 Visiting Record** is to be completed in the ODB for **EVERY** non-essential visit or one-time (not re-occurring) essential visit at support location or essential overnight visit outside of support location.

For re-occurring essential visits or visits with designated visitors, the COVID-19 Visiting Record is to be completed and approved **ONCE**, in advance of the first visit, and documentation of subsequent visits will be recorded in support notes. See **Essential Visits** for more details.

COVID-19 Visiting Records are to be reviewed and approved by the location supervisor before and following visits to confirm they follow the plan.
- f. Employees are aware of the schedule of visits and their responsibilities in either supporting others at the location or the visit directly.
- g. Be familiar with "[COVID-19 Visiting Guide for Families or Friends](#)." Ensure family or friends receive this guide in advance and that someone is available to talk with them about these guidelines as needed.
- h. People who use our services may visit with family or friends through any of the following types of visits:
 - Drive-by visits: Family or friends remain in their vehicle while their friend or loved one is outside of their home. This may be the best option for people who have difficulty keeping physical distance.

- Outdoor visits: People can be outside (in a driveway or yard/on a porch/deck) together.
- Indoor visits: People can visit in a large, open space indoors that allows for physical distancing. As per MCCSS guidelines, visitors cannot use the washroom (except for hand hygiene) and will remain within the designated visiting area space for the duration of the visit.
- Essential overnight visits: People using services can visit with family or friends overnight when critical for their health and wellbeing. See **Essential Overnight Visits** guidelines on Page 4.

2) Preparing the Designated Space

- a. Visits will be held at a designated area that is comfortable, accessible and has the space capacity to allow for physical distancing.
- b. At least 2 metres (6 ft) physical distance is to be kept between all parties throughout the visit.
- c. The area, including furniture, will be thoroughly cleaned, and disinfected before and after every visit. To reduce exposure risks, family or friends may be encouraged to bring their own lawn chairs if it is an outdoor visit.
- d. Designated visitors will need to wait outside if the support location is already at capacity with other scheduled visitors and cannot accommodate an unannounced visit due to physical distancing restrictions.

3) Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) and Screening as per Public Health Guidelines:

- a. Visitors are to use hand sanitizer upon arrival and wear a mask through the duration of the visit. People using services must also wash their hands before and after visiting.
- b. All employees must clean their hands thoroughly using hand sanitizer before entering the workplace, after a visit, and after contact with surfaces others have touched.
- c. An active screening station is to be set up prior to the visit. Use masking tape (or other method as necessary) to designate appropriate spacing so that physical distancing can be maintained. The proper documents should be on hand along with hand sanitizer, and PPE.
- d. An employee is designated to complete the active screening wearing appropriate PPE (*goggles or a face shield, and a commercial/surgical mask*).
- e. Active screening will take place for all visitors as per the [COVID-19 Screening Protocol](#), confirming they are not experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms.
- f. Visits will be rescheduled if the visitors do not pass active screening.

4) During the Visit

- a. Employees will support each person to prepare for the visit. An employee should be present or maintain visibility to provide adequate ongoing support and to confirm that the visit proceeds as planned.
- b. Designated and non-essential visitors must remain in the designated visitation area and maintain a 2-metre distance with people using services and employees for the duration of the visit.
- c. Any concerns regarding the visit will be documented in the **COVID-19 Visiting Record**. If agreed protocols are not followed, the visit may end early.

ESSENTIAL VISITS

Essential Visits include visits by an Essential Visitor, which can fall under one of the following categories:

1) Compassionate Visits

If a person using services experiences a major health event and/or decline in health (e.g., palliative, critical illness, end-of-life), as determined by their medical practitioner, and district leadership is aware and approved, then, an in-home visit will be permitted on compassionate grounds, following the “**Guidelines for Essential Visits.**”

2) Essential Support Services

The following external professional or support services provided by an Essential Visitor will be deemed essential visits and will follow the “**Guidelines for Essential Visits**” if...

- An intervention is required for a person using services at a Christian Horizons location that necessitates health care services or can only be completed by an external professional (such as a nurse, behaviour therapist, etc.), **OR**
- In consultation with the Community Facilities Specialist, it is determined that a necessary repair or inspection impacting health and safety and ongoing operation of the home is required that can only be completed by an external professional (such as a repair to the air conditioner or furnace, etc.), **AND**
- The visit is vital to maintain the health, wellness, and safety of the person using services, **AND**
- District leadership is aware and approved.

GUIDELINES FOR ESSENTIAL VISITS

Approval is required as per the **COVID-19 Visiting Guide for Locations** process, by the Area Manager and Executive Director. The **COVID-19 Visiting Record** can be used to plan, document, and approve the visit.

The visitor(s) must:

- 1) Pass active screening (i.e., temperature check, health questions) before entering the location, and complete the screening process at the end of each visit (See **COVID-19 Screening Protocol**),
- 2) Wear a mask (non-medical masks are sufficient), and
- 3) Be accompanied by or be in ongoing visual contact with an employee, for the duration of the visit.

Note:

If a person using services requires recurring and frequent visits from an essential service worker (e.g., PSW, BT, RN, etc.), at a predictable and/or routine time, please obtain written approval on the plan (e.g., purpose of visit, expected frequency and/or schedule of visits, etc.) from the Area Manager for this collection of visits. In this case, the COVID-19 Visiting Record is to be completed in the ODB and approved once, in advance of the first visit, and documentation of subsequent visits will be recorded in support notes.

ESSENTIAL OVERNIGHT VISITS

On September 9, 2020, MCCSS shared additional clarification around essential overnight visits. See **Section E: Essential Overnight Absences** of the ***Visitor's Guidelines 2.0: Re-Opening of Congregate Living Settings***.

An **essential overnight absence** (e.g. to a family home), according to MCCSS, "is one considered necessary to maintain the health, wellness and safety, or any applicable legal rights, of a resident. Agencies should take careful consideration to support residents' emotional well-being through overnight absences."

Enhanced Precautions

The updated guidelines require that people returning after overnight stays must follow enhanced precautions for 14 days, including:

- ✓ Pass active screening
- ✓ Maintain physical distance from others and limit contact with housemates
- ✓ Avoid using common areas; however, if a common area cannot be avoided, the person must use a face covering/mask
- ✓ Only participate in group activities if physical distancing is maintained and a face covering/mask is used
- ✓ Practice proper hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette
- ✓ Monitor for symptoms of COVID-19

During the 14-day period people may:

- only receive outdoor visitors during the 14 days.
- leave their residence for short stay (non-overnight) absences (e.g., go to school, go on walks and other activities of daily living). MCCSS guidelines for going out in the community should be followed.

GUIDELINES FOR ESSENTIAL OVERNIGHT VISITS

Approval is required by the Area Manager and Executive Director. The **COVID-19 Visiting Record** can be used to plan, document, and approve the visit.

To help coordinate any essential overnight visits, we have established clarifying guidance for teams including the steps to follow in safely arranging an essential overnight visit:

- 1) A few hours before an overnight visit commences, both the person and their family should be actively screened for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 using Christian Horizons [active screening protocol](#). People showing signs or symptoms of COVID-19 should reschedule their visit.
- 2) People and their families are to be reminded to exercise appropriate precautions during the stay (e.g. practice respiratory etiquette, hand hygiene, avoid crowded places, practice physical distancing and wear a mask if out in the community, etc.). See resources at: www.christian-horizons.org/coronavirus.
- 3) Remind people and their families to track the places they have gone and who they have been in contact with by completing the [Where I've been Timeline](#) tracker together while they're out in the community.
- 4) When the person returns after their essential overnight visit, they will again undergo active screening for signs and symptoms of COVID 19. Those who show symptoms of COVID-19 or anyone who wishes to, will be supported to get tested.
- 5) Upon returning, people are to practice 14-days of enhanced precautions as per the MCCSS guidelines outlined in the [Enhanced Precautions](#) box above.
- 6) We will assist people using services in obtaining a face mask/covering to use during the 14-day period if they do not already have one.
- 7) During the 14 days, the person should continue to be monitored for symptoms of COVID-19 as per the [daily monitoring protocol](#).

VISITS IN THE COMMUNITY

On September 9, 2020, MCCSS shared new guidelines around essential overnight visits. See **Section D: Requirements for Short-Stay Absences & Outings** of the **Visitor's Guidelines 2.0: Re-Opening of Congregate Living Settings**.

Information about having visits in the community (e.g. in parks, on patios, at restaurants, at the malls, at a family member's home not overnight, etc.) can be found in the [Going out Safely Guide](#) on our website.

GUIDELINES FOR VISITS IN THE COMMUNITY

The following are a few important reminders of how teams can help support people who use our services to safely visit in the community:

- 1) Exercise appropriate precautions while out in the community (e.g. practice respiratory etiquette, hand hygiene, avoid crowded places, practice physical distancing and wear mask).
- 2) Track who they have been in contact with and where they have gone in case they start to feel sick and need to let others know by completing the [Where I've been Timeline](#) tracker.
- 3) When the person returns home, they will undergo active screening for signs and symptoms of COVID 19. Those who show symptoms of COVID-19 or anyone who wishes to, will be supported to get tested.

The [Safety in Your Community Social Story](#), [Rules and Risks Social Story](#), and [Going out? Do it Safely](#) can be used to help people understand or explain how to safely spend time in the community.