

February 19, 2021

All Alberta Licensed Supportive Living, Long-Term Care and Hospice Operators

RE: Decision making in relation to Visitor/Designated Family/Support Person Restrictions (CMOH Order 29-2020)

Dear Staff and Operators:

I am writing to outline the decision making process required to restrict visiting persons, including Designated Family/Support Persons (DFSP), and specifically the evidence you will need to present to any Alberta Health Executive Officer (EO) in order to determine compliance with CMOH Order 29-2020.

As outlined in CMOH Order 29-2020, there is a difference between visitors and DFSPs:

- DFSPs are determined essential as they are key partners in the provision of support to residents and critical to maintenance of resident physical and mental health and well being. As such, DFSPs' access to the resident they support is permitted even during an outbreak unless there are extraordinary circumstances.
- Visitor (non-DFSP) access is determined both by resident circumstance (extenuating circumstances), and, in the case of social visits, the site risk tolerance assessment and other intersecting restrictions (e.g. current province-wide restriction to social visits).

Only in rare circumstances should an operator consider temporary restricted access for DFSPs. An operator who, for reasons such as an outbreak, wants to restrict access by DFSPs outside of the parameters outlined in Order 29-2020 does not have the authority to make that decision without consulting with local public health.

Operators must engage at minimum either the Medical Officer of Health (MOH), Alberta Health Services (AHS) Communicable Disease Control (CDC) or MOH Designate, who can authorize a temporary restriction to access. The decision for a temporary restriction to DFSP access is a last resort; as such, it needs to be evidence based and must not exceed 14 days without re-evaluation. Mitigation strategies such as virtual visits must be implemented to ensure resident mental health during the access restriction. Residents, alternative decision makers, family and DFSPs must be informed (minimally) of the decision to restrict access and ideally be consulted however possible.

If there are temporary restrictions to access, Alberta Health EOs will be looking for the following evidence when on site:

- Written approval (an email is adequate) from the MOH, AHS CDC or MOH Designate detailing what restrictions are being put in place (e.g. DFSP access), the reasons why these increased restrictions are required, an end date and any indicators that would result in extensions of the timeline or reassessment dates/milestones.
- When access is restricted, proof of how an operator is continuing to support virtual connection when physical presence of DFSP(s) is not possible.
- Proof (email, letters or posters) that these changes are being communicated to residents and their families.

As the pandemic response evolves and broader province-wide measures are eased (e.g. restriction to indoor social visits), I will provide additional information, as relevant, as you continue to protect your residents and staff. As I have stressed before, now more than ever it is important to continue regular and ongoing communication with residents, families and visiting persons and ensure their involvement in the planning and site policy re-assessment process. If you have questions about this, please contact ASAL@gov.ab.ca or call 780-644-8428.

Thank you for your support and shared commitment to prevent the spread of COVID-19, and for the ongoing hard work you are putting in to keep your residents and staff safe.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Deena Hinshaw', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Deena Hinshaw, BSc, MD, MPH, CCFP, FRCP
Chief Medical Officer of Health

cc: John Cabral, Assistant Deputy Minister, Health Service Delivery, Alberta Health
Trish Merrithew-Mercredi, Assistant Deputy Minister, Public Health and Compliance, Alberta Health
Dr. Laura McDougall, Senior Medical Officer of Health, Alberta Health Services