

## COVID-19 Family Update December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021

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Dear Families, Friends, and Partners in Care,

Understandably, there has been a heightened concern regarding COVID-19 in our communities, especially with the increased transmissibility of the Omicron variant. As always, we want you to know that Kinsmen Lodge is doing everything possible to help keep our Elders, staff, and entire KL family safe and healthy during this time. It is of paramount importance to us.

This morning, Dr. Bonnie Henry, Provincial Health Officer, announced that the government is imposing visitor restrictions in long-term care homes as the province deals with unprecedented levels of COVID-19 transmission. **Starting tomorrow, Saturday, January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022, only essential visitors will be allowed to visit onsite.** The restriction will remain in place until January 18<sup>th</sup>, at which point health officials will be re-evaluating a number of measures implemented to combat the rapid surge in COVID-19 cases that began earlier this month.

Over the last two weeks, since the arrival of the Omicron variant, B.C.'s seven-day average for COVID-19 infections has increased five-fold. That has recently led to a resurgence in health-care facility outbreaks, including at eight long-term care homes. Additionally, 31 homes have been placed on enhanced precautions. It has become quite apparent that people can transmit the latest iteration of the virus very rapidly, even with very mild symptoms.

### **Guidelines for Essential Visitors:**

**Essential visits** are necessarily linked with an **essential need** that cannot be met in the absence of the essential visit. Management staff will determine if a visit is deemed essential.

### **An essential visit is defined as:**

- Visits for compassionate care, including critical illness (e.g., life-threatening condition or health change event), palliative care (e.g., Palliative Performance Scale 30% or lower, totally bed bound), hospice care, end-of-life care, and medical assistance in dying;
- Visits paramount to the Elder's physical care and mental well-being (e.g., assistance with feeding, mobility, personal care, or communication, assistance by designated representatives for persons with disabilities);
- Visits for supported decision-making;
- Existing registered volunteers providing the services described above;
- Visits required to move belongings in/out of an Elder's room; and
- Police, correctional officers, and peace officers accompanying an Elder for security reasons.

**Essential visits shall be limited to one visitor per Elder within the care home at a time** (except in the case of palliative/end-of-life care). An essential visit is not considered a social visit.



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In recognition of the increased transmissibility of the Omicron variant of concern and given the vulnerability of residents in LTC even when fully vaccinated themselves, individuals visiting LTC homes **must be screened for COVID-19 by receiving a rapid point-of-care (POC) test prior to their visit.**

Rapid POC tests provide the opportunity to rapidly screen people for COVID-19, with results ready in approximately 20 minutes. These tests can help reduce the potential for introduction and spread of COVID-19 in LTC. **The rapid POC screening requirement for all visitors is in addition to the current requirements for visitors to be fully vaccinated and to adhere to infection prevention and control measures** (e.g., medical-grade face mask and eye protection, goggles or face shield, must be worn at all times while onsite). Visitors who receive a positive rapid POC test result, refuse not to receive a rapid POC test, or who do not demonstrate that they are fully vaccinated will not be able to enter a LTC facility, including passing through the facility to access an outdoor space. There are no exceptions to the rapid POC screening requirement based on medical exemption from vaccination, essential or social visitor status, including compassionate visits related to end-of-life. The rapid POC screening requirement in LTC excludes children under age 12.

**Social Leaves:** Due to the high risk to everyone at Kinsmen Lodge, at this time, we are asking you to refrain from taking Elders offsite for social leaves and limit outings to **essential leaves only** (e.g., dialysis, medical appointments).

We are grateful for your understanding and support while we implement these difficult, challenging, yet necessary protocols to protect our vulnerable Elders.

If you should have any further questions, please feel free to contact us at [info@kinsmenlodge.ca](mailto:info@kinsmenlodge.ca) or call us at (604) 588-0445.

Warm Regards,

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Kinsmen Lodge