

# hospice update

April 30, 2020

Dear families of patients in hospice,

We hope you are keeping healthy and safe.

Things continue to shift and evolve with the pandemic as more information and evidence is received. Thank you for your patience and understanding as we navigate changes.

Yesterday afternoon, the Chief Medical Officer of Health released an order with changes to hospice visitation. While standalone hospices do not have the same limitations, hospices such as ours which are collocated must be diligent in safeguarding the health of residents in supportive living and continuing care. Residents are among the most vulnerable for experiencing severe symptoms of COVID-19. At the same time, we must be conscious of protecting the health of our staff so that they can continue to care for your loved ones.

The new order clarifies that visitation is permitted when a resident is within two weeks of end of life. While it is difficult to be precise about this timeframe, our clinical team will do their very best to assess each situation carefully and thoughtfully to allow you to have as much time as possible with your loved one.

To facilitate and adhere to the new orders please note that:

All visits continue to be **pre-arranged** by calling the hospice between 8 am and 4 pm. Please leave a message if we are unable to answer and we will call you back as soon as possible.

Families must identify one person to be the **designated essential visitor**. The designated essential visitor must be identified by the patient, guardian, or alternate decision maker. It is this person who will schedule visits and approve visitors including other family members, religious leaders, children, and friends

**Our clinical care team will assess each patient regularly.** For those not experiencing acute changes, visitation will be twice a week for the designated essential visitor. At any time, when a patient experiences a major change in their condition, the guardian or alternate decision maker will be notified and flexibility in the visitation protocol will be discussed.

In most instances only **one visitor** is permitted to be in the building at a time, except when the visitor is a child

Outdoor visits will be supported when pre-planned and scheduled. **Outdoor visits** are a maximum of three individuals—the patient, the designated essential visitor, and one other. Physical distancing must be practiced for outdoor visits.

Visitors must wear **masks** for visits inside the building and outdoors and, if appropriate, additional personal protective equipment as deemed by the centre

Visitors must practice **hand hygiene**, washing their hands with soap and water or using hand sanitizer before entering and leaving the resident's room

## Thank you

This is a road we are journeying together—and one that is constantly shifting and evolving with new information and evidence.

We are not forgetting, even for a moment, that having a loved one in hospice is incredibly difficult and is a time for conversation, care, and healing. People who work in hospice do so intentionally and with a tremendous sense of purpose. Our team is compassionate and resilient; they believe that walking with people at end of life is a privilege.

Each of us have made important decisions that have helped our centre to stay free of COVID-19. I am proud of our team for their diligence. This pandemic journey is asking so much of all of us—your loved ones, staff, and yourselves—to be patient, understanding, and kind.

As always, please contact your Resident Care Manager with questions or send them to us at [admin@covenantcare.ca](mailto:admin@covenantcare.ca). For the most recent information on the pandemic please see [ahs.ca/COVID](https://ahs.ca/COVID).

Please stay healthy and well.

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