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**Disclaimer:** Any PRINTED version of this document is only accurate up to the “Last Revised” date. Always refer to the Policy Professional module on Surge Learning for the most current versions of the documents in effect.

## 1.0 POLICY:

To provide clear direction to SJV staff, visitors, contracted services and volunteers in keeping with current Ministry of Long-Term Care legislation, local Public Health, and SJV policies to help ensure safe visiting at any given time.

The SJV Safe Visiting policy is governed by the current MLTC Management of Cases and Contacts of COVID-19, Guidance Documents published by the province and City of Hamilton Public Health guidelines. It is also driven by the following principles in order to support the best possible quality of life for residents in addition to positive mental and emotional well-being:


**√ Safety:** Any approach to visiting must balance the health and safety of residents, staff, and visitors, and ensure risks are mitigated.

**√ Emotional Well-being:** Welcoming visitors is intended to support the 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, consistent with their preferences and within reasonable restrictions that safeguard residents.

**√ Flexibility:** The physical/infrastructure characteristics of the home, its workforce or human resources availability, whether the home is in an outbreak and the current status of the home with respect to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) are all variables to consider when setting home-specific policies.

**√ Equality:** Residents have the right to choose their visitors. In addition, residents and / or their substitute decision makers have the right to designate caregivers.

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This policy is subject to change with short notice dependent on MLTC Guidance document changes, recommendations from the St. Joseph's Villa IPAC (Infection, Prevention and Control) team, Province of Ontario or City of Hamilton Public Health.

## 2.0 Visitor Logs

In accordance with section 267(2) of O. Reg. 246/22, the Villa must maintain visitor logs of all visits to the home. The visitor log must include, at minimum:

- the name and contact information of the visitor
- time and date of the visit
- the purpose of the visit (for example, the name of resident visited)

These visitor logs are located on every resident home area and records are kept for a minimum of 30 days and are readily available to the local public health if required.

## 3.0 Education

The Villa will provide education or training to all visitors about physical distancing, respiratory etiquette, hand hygiene, IPAC practices, and proper use of PPE. This can be done via posters, communications and through online videos. Visitors are encouraged to watch the recommended Public Health Ontario resources to support IPAC and PPE education and training as available on our website.

- poster - recommended steps: putting on personal protective equipment
- video: putting on full personal protective equipment
- video: taking off full personal protective equipment
- videos: how to hand wash and how to hand rub


## 4.0 TYPES OF VISITORS & DEFINITIONS:

### a) Not Considered Visitors

Villa staff, volunteers and student placements are not considered visitors. Infants under the age of one are not considered visitors and are excluded from testing requirements.

### b) Essential Visitors

As per [O. Reg. 246/22](#) under the [Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021](#), there are four types of essential visitors:

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1. A caregiver, is anyone who has been identified as the POA or those who are considered to be in the residents' care circle as determined by the resident.
2. A support worker who visits a home to provide support to the critical operations of the home or to provide essential services to residents including but not limited to physicians, nurse practitioners, lab and x-ray technicians and maintenance technicians.
3. A person visiting a very ill resident for compassionate reasons including, but not limited to, hospice services or end-of-life care
4. A government inspector with a statutory right to enter a long-term care home to carry out their duties


**c) General Visitors** - is a person who is not an essential visitor and is visiting to provide non-essential services related to either the operations of the home or a particular resident or group of residents. General visitors include those persons visiting for social reasons as well as visitors providing non-essential services such as personal care services, entertainment, or individuals touring the home. If the Villa or home area is in outbreak, general visitors may not be allowed to enter if the local Public Health Unit indicates this.

#### **d) Definition of an Outbreak**

Only the local public health unit can declare an outbreak and declare when it is over. It is not the long-term care home's responsibility to determine whether cases have an epidemiological link. Local public health units will determine whether cases have an epidemiological link as part of their investigation, which will inform their decision as to whether or not they declare an outbreak.

- i) a **suspect outbreak** in a LTC home is defined as one single lab-confirmed case in a resident (covid, influenza, RSV)
- ii) a **confirmed outbreak** in a LTC home is defined as two or more lab-confirmed cases in residents or staff (or other visitors) in a home with an epidemiological link, within a 14-day period, where at least one case could have been reasonably acquired their infection in the home.

**e) Passive screening** means that those entering the home review screening posted questions themselves, and there is no verification or reporting of screening results (these are located at the entrances of the Villa).

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## 5.0 VISITORS SHALL BE HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR:

1. Abiding by all guidelines in this policy provided and or posted to support the safety of all Villa residents and staff
2. Exceptions to masking requirements are as follows:
  - a) Children who are younger than 2 years of age;
  - b) Any individual (staff, visitor, or resident) who is being accommodated in accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005; and/or
  - c) Any individual (staff, visitor, or resident) who is being reasonably accommodated in accordance with the Human Rights Code.
  - d) When alone in a resident's room, masks can be removed, however, masks must be worn when leaving the residents room. It is important to note, that it is highly recommended that masks remain on at all time especially indoors and on resident facing activity.
3. To ensure they read all IPAC related information that is sent out to them via communications, posted signage and reach out if they are unsure of something including donning and doffing their PPE.

## 6.0 EQUIPMENT/TOOLS:


- Sign In sheets
- Procedure masks/N95/other PPE as required
- IPAC posters as needed

## 7.0 IPAC Audits

The Villa will ensure measures are taken to prepare for and respond to an outbreak including regular auditing.

## 8.0 ACCESS TO SJV:

Everyone in a LTC home, whether it is staff, students, volunteers, caregivers, support workers, general visitors and residents, has a responsibility to ensure the ongoing health and safety of all by practicing the measures identified in this policy. All visitors to the home are required to follow all public health and facility IPAC measures (for example, passive screening, physical distancing, hand hygiene, and wearing PPE as appropriate) for the duration of their visit in the home, especially indoors.

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Homes must follow any guidance provided by the local public health unit with respect to any additional measures that must be implemented to reduce the risk of transmission.

### **Restrictions during outbreaks or when a resident is isolating**

#### **Essential visitors**

**As per section 267(1) of [O. Reg. 246/22](#) essential visitors, which includes caregivers, support workers, persons visiting for compassionate reasons, including for end-of-life care, and inspectors, continue to have access to the Villa during any type of outbreak.**

Homes must follow the direction from their local public health unit during an outbreak, which may include advising general visitors to postpone all non-essential visits, per the [COVID-19 Guidance: Long-Term Care Homes, Retirement Homes, and other Congregate Living Settings for Public Health Units](#).


## **9.0 SCREENING:**

All persons are required to complete passive screening upon entering the home. If it is considered a failed screen, the Villa asks that the person refrains from visiting the home until symptoms are cleared or improving for a greater than 24 hours (or 48 hours if gastro symptoms are present). Staff to report to the staffing office or direct manager regarding failed screen.

## **10.0 SUPPORT PERSONS (FOR THOSE WITH A DISABILITY):**

Often, people who need the help of a support person are not able to do certain things by themselves. For example, a support person might help with communication, mobility or personal care.

A visitor may require a support person to help them visit SJV. A support person for any visitor should adhere to the Villa's Safe Visiting policy and follow the same passive screening, and IPAC requirements as visitors to the home.

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Visitors who need a support person (and do not have one of their own) are required to inform SJV in advance so that preparations can be made accordingly.

#### **11.0 RESPONDING TO INFECTION PREVENTION & CONTROL NON-ADHERENCE BY VISITORS:**

SJV recognizes the importance of and fully supports optimizing resident quality of life, meeting resident care needs and emotional well-being; however, if a visitor is non-compliant to any of the IPAC measures and guidelines put in place (including putting on and/or removing required PPE properly) and negatively impacts the health and safety of residents, staff and other visitors of the Villa, the visit may be discontinued, suspended for a period of up to 14 days, and future requests for visits being denied.

Before any action takes place, staff will educate/re-educate all necessary parties on the Villa's "Safe Visiting" policy, IPAC measures and encourage compliance. The individual or resident has the option to initiate an appeal process by submitting a completed "Tell Us How We Are Doing" form. The appropriate manager will then review and strategize how visits can resume in a safe manner for all parties.

#### **12.0 REFERENCES & RESOURCES:**

- 1) Fixing Long Term Care Act 2021
- 2) **COVID\_19 Guidance Document for Long Term Care Homes in Ontario, November 7, 2023.**
- 3) At a Glance: Ministry of Health: Prevention and Management of COVID-19 in Long Term Care and Retirement Homes (January 2023)
- 4) IPAC Standard for Long-Term Care Homes, April 2022 Revised September 2023
- 5) SJV COVID-19 Immunization Policy