

October 29, 2020

AR 197279

All North Zone, Central Zone and South Zone Licensed Supportive Living, Long-Term Care and Hospice Operators

**RE: Rising COVID-19 Case Numbers and Safe Visiting Policy (CMOH Order 29-2020)**

Dear Staff and Operators:

I am writing to express my concern about the rising COVID-19 case numbers in the province of Alberta.

Under the CMOH Order 29-2020 *Risk of Unknown Exposure Assessment*, **any visiting person who works or lives in an area of high COVID-19 exposure (e.g. Edmonton, Calgary) is considered higher risk of unknown exposure.** For all visiting persons from these regions, this means it is critical to ensure understanding of site policy and the safe visiting practices, including hand hygiene, continuous masking, physical distancing, and symptom screening. People at high risk of unknown exposure to COVID-19 are advised to have no physical contact with the person they are supporting unless providing direct resident care wearing all appropriate PPE.

Please ensure you are considering where visiting persons are coming from when adjusting your risk tolerance assessment and, if needed, your site's Safe Visiting Policy and Process. Although your site might not be in a region of high exposure, please ensure your mechanism for ongoing assessment of risk designation is developed and that your site policy is responsive to any changes (e.g. temporarily suspending social visits from visitors if appropriate).

Only in rare circumstances, and after consultation with public health or a Medical Officer of Health, should a site consider restrictions for designated family/support persons. The presence of designated family/support persons must be supported as essential to the maintenance of resident mental and physical health, even in an outbreak situation.

This said, I encourage you to communicate with residents and families and ask that any visiting person from high risk areas evaluate their own need to be physically present (based on resident need), to help in limiting the amount of people entering your site. They should be supported to consider virtual options to connecting with residents.

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](mailto: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,



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  
Laura McDougall, Senior Medical Officer of Health, Alberta Health Services