

## **For Residents, Families, and Staff of Homeland Housing**

As you may be aware, the number of COVID-19 cases, including hospital and ICU admissions have increased exponentially over the past month, potentially creating capacity issues on the health system. In response, on November 12<sup>th</sup>, the Government of Alberta enacted new restrictions on indoor social gatherings to reduce community spread of the virus. Premier Kenney reminds us “this two-week push is, I believe, our last chance to avoid more restrictive measures that I and most Albertans desperately want to avoid” ([www.alberta.ca](http://www.alberta.ca)). While these restrictions have no direct impact on continuing care, increased cases of COVID-19 across Alberta over the past six weeks pose a greater risk of residents contracting the virus. Now more than ever, we need to work together to limit the spread of this life-threatening infection to our seniors and those living with chronic illness.

### **Designated Family and Support Persons**

- There are no changes to the CMOH order. Each resident may designate **up to two adults** who are essential in supporting the mental and physical health of their loved one.
- Designated Family and Support Persons may access the lodge for **indoor visits**.
- Homeland Housing is asking designated family/support persons to **consider alternatives to in-person visits for the next two weeks whenever possible**. Alternatives include telephone calls or booking a virtual visit. To set an appointment for a virtual visit, please contact reception or the activity coordinator at your site.

If you **must visit in-person, please stop and ask yourself the following questions:**

1. *Is this visit of high importance?*
2. *Have I been in contact with anyone who does not follow the COVID-19 guidelines, or is being tested for COVID-19?*
3. *Do I have any symptoms that could be a sign of COVID-19?*
4. *What steps should I take to make sure I am keeping my loved one safe during the visit?*

Ensuring we practice these public health measures will help us get through the challenging weeks ahead, and help ensure further restrictions are not needed, closer to the holidays. We ask for your continued support in partnering with us to keep your loved one safe.

## Residents in Community and Visiting Family or Friends

- The current order from the Chief Medical Officer of Health does not restrict residents from going into the community, visiting family, or attending social events. Rather, the government announcement encourages Albertans to limit community and social gatherings wherever possible to reduce community spread of the COVID-19 virus.
  - **For the next two-week period**, Homeland Housing asks residents to consider reducing their community and social gatherings. This would include limiting shopping, visits with family and friends, or visits from designated family/support persons.
  - Be mindful when visiting off site in the community. Being out in the community presents a risk of contracting COVID-19 and spreading it to your family, your resident neighbours, and staff.
  - Residents choosing to attend social and community gatherings should take precautions to limit the spread of COVID-19 to others, including their lodge neighbors by:
    - continuously wearing a mask when in the community and at social gatherings;
    - limiting physical contact with others (hugging, kissing, shaking hands);
    - not sharing food or drinks at social functions;
    - practicing hand hygiene upon leaving and returning to the lodge;
    - practicing physical distancing, maintaining six feet of distance between you and other persons. This includes family, neighbors, staff, and those around you in the community;
    - immediately reporting if you have been in close contact with a person/family member who tested positive for COVID-19;
    - immediately reporting if you are feeling unwell or have tested positive for COVID-19; and
    - being aware of your surroundings and understanding the risks associated with your daily activities. Examples include attending social events or visiting communities on the Alberta COVID Watch List, the number of people at a family or social event outside the 'direct bubble' of your designated family/support person, being around people with cold, influenza or COVID like symptoms.
  - Upon return to site, staff will ask you to complete a health questionnaire and take your temperature. A risk assessment will be completed to determine possible COVID exposure.
  - Overnight or extended stays with family and friends are discouraged at this time.
- COVID-19 is highly contagious and often fatal to individuals over 65 years old or living with chronic health conditions. Now more than at any other time during this

pandemic, we need to be vigilant in protecting each other. Taking these small precautions can go a long way in limiting community spread and potentially reducing the likelihood of infecting your family, resident neighbors, and staff.

## Safe Indoor Visiting Guidelines for Designated Family/Support Persons

- If you are feeling unwell, **do not visit**. COVID-19 is a highly contagious illness spread through respiratory droplets from our nose and mouth when we cough, sneeze, talk, sing or breathe harder after physical exertion.
- Visitors will be screened upon entry and each time they visit. The screening includes a health questionnaire and having your temperature taken.
- Disposable face masks **must always** be worn during your visit. Wearing a face mask protects those around you. Homeland Housing will provide you with a disposable face mask upon entering the lodge.
- All Designated Family/Support Persons and guest must wear **Homeland Housing provided appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE)** as needed or directed by staff.
- Practice hand hygiene: wash your hands or use hand sanitizer upon entering and leaving the site.
- Visitors are required to sign in and out for each visit. This information is used

by Alberta Health Services for contact tracing in the event of a COVID-19 outbreak.

- Gifts for residents are permitted. We ask that food gifts are contained in a wipeable plastic container.
- Visiting children/minors are not allowed indoor visits at this time.
- Designated Family and Support Persons are expected to observe and follow safe visiting practices. These include observing all signage, following instructions from staff using personal protective equipment, and practicing physical distancing.
- Designated family/support persons **breaching safe visiting guidelines will be asked to leave the site and further indoor visits may be suspended.**

## Where Can I Visit Indoors?

- At this time, indoor visits are restricted to the **resident's room/suite**.
- Visitors may not access recreation areas, dining rooms, and other common areas for infection control reasons.
- Visitors are asked to observe signage and maintain physical distancing with residents and staff.
- Pets are welcome to visit. The pet must always be on a leash, under the control of their human and restricted to the resident's room/suite.

## Use of Face Masks

There is evidence that asymptomatic, pre-symptomatic, or minimally symptomatic individuals can transmit COVID-19. As such, Homeland Housing provides disposable medical procedure masks for all residents, staff, and designated family/support persons. Masks are available from the door greeters or reception at each site. It is preferred that individuals use these masks rather than cloth face masks for infection prevention and control reasons.

- **Staff** must continuously wear a face mask when physical distancing is not practical and when providing direct care with residents.
- **Designated Family/Support Persons** must always wear a mask when on lodge common property. The mask **must be correctly worn over the mouth and nose.**
- With the increased number of COVID-19 cases in the community, Homeland Housing recommends the designated family/support person continuously wear their mask in the resident's room/suite **AND the resident wear a mask as well for the duration of the visit.**
- Disposable face masks are available from the door greeter or reception.

## Additional Precautions

As an additional precaution, Homeland Housing will be providing Clorox/Lysol wipes in each resident room/suite over the upcoming week.

**Designated family/support persons** are asked to use the wipes to sanitize high touch surfaces such as door handles, bathroom fixtures such as toilet flush handles, sink faucet handles, TV remotes upon the conclusion of your visit. Housekeeping staff will replenish the wipes as part of their regular room cleaning tasks.

## What Happens if there is a confirmed COVID-19 Outbreak?

A COVID-19 outbreak is declared by Alberta Health Services if

- One (1) resident tests positive for the virus; and
- One (1) staff member tests positive and has worked at the site during the communicable period.

Symptomatic residents and staff are required to self-isolate. Alberta Health Services will arrange to have all residents and staff tested for the virus and additional infection, prevention and control practices will be implemented.

The resident's designated family/support person will be contacted by telephone and/or email advising of the outbreak.

The frequency of Designated family or support person visits may be reduced during the outbreak period.

Guidelines from the CMOH advise that Designated family/support persons may continue to visit during an outbreak with increased PPE and surveillance.