

Ministry of Health

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June 15, 2020

MEMORANDUM

MEMORANDUM TO: All Public and Private Hospitals

**FROM: Dr. David Williams
Chief Medical Officer of Health
Ministry of Health**

RE: Visitors to Acute Care Settings

The Ministry of Health (“ministry”) continues to coordinate the response to COVID-19 and to keep the health sector updated as the situation and evidence evolve.

We have entered a new phase with re-opening of the Province along with the gradual resumption of health services, including those in acute care settings. However, there is still a need to mitigate COVID-19 risks to patients, staff and visitors while balancing the mental, physical and spiritual needs of patients for their quality of life.

Visits from family and caregivers, and other visitors contribute greatly to a patient’s quality of life and well-being. The ministry recognizes the challenges family and caregivers have endured during the COVID-19 pandemic while trying to visit their loved ones in hospital.

To this end, as an update to my March 19, 2020, memo, and in recognition of the importance of the role of visitation, I recommend that acute care settings begin the resumption of visitors. Existing visitor policies regarding essential visitors should be revised accordingly to allow visits by family/caregivers and other types of visitors. Consideration should be given to the patient’s circumstances and the visitor’s role.

It remains important for acute care settings to monitor COVID-19 activity in their facility and work closely with their local public health unit to understand COVID-19 activity in their community overall, to inform and adjust visitation policies, as needed.

Visitor policies should follow public health measures (proper hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, physical distancing, masking for source control), provide public education/ communication on COVID-19 risks, and follow infection prevention and control practices in order to minimize the risk of COVID-19 transmission. All visitors should continue to be actively screened prior to entry into the acute care setting.

We will continue to monitor this situation closely and provide further guidance or direction as needed.

We thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "D Williams".

David C. Williams, MD, MHSc, FRCPC
Chief Medical Officer of Health

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