

# Disability Support Program - Visitor Guidelines

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## PURPOSE

Across the province, DSP homes are now beginning to allow outdoor visits, by appointment, for participants and their families/support networks. It is important to make sure these visits are conducted in a way that keeps participants and staff safe.

The Disability Support Program - Visitor Guidelines has been developed to support safe outdoor and indoor visits between participants and their family/support network.

**Note:** these guidelines will apply to the following DSP licensed settings:

- Residential Care Facilities (RCF)
- Group Homes (GH)
- Small Option Homes (SOH)
- Developmental Residences (DR)

Given that participants are permitted community access, the preference is for visits to continue to take place outdoors, unless not possible due to a participant's mobility, other support needs, or due to weather.

Visiting guidelines for Adult Residential Centres (ARCs) and Regional Rehabilitation Centres (RRCs) will continue to follow the DHW guidelines for LTC visitation per the Health Protection Act Order.

## PREPARING FOR VISITS

### Capture Visitor Information - Be Ready to Communicate

- ❑ Create and maintain a visitor logbook including:
  - name of visitor(s) and contact information
  - name of participant visited
  - date and time of visit
  - COVID-19 screening results

This information is important to ensure service providers are prepared to quickly and effectively communicate with other staff, families, and Public Health if a participant or visitor becomes ill with COVID-related signs and symptoms.

## Prepare Your Homes for Visits

- ❑ Establish a designated area for both indoor and outdoor visits. Providers should also consider implementing the following:
  - physical markings on the ground to indicate the flow of people to and from the designated visiting area to maintain physical distancing
  - physical markings within the designated visiting areas to indicate appropriate distance between visitors and participants.
- ❑ For indoor visiting areas, consider implementing the following:
  - designating the indoor visit space to be as close to the entrance as possible;
  - designating a single room to be used for visits, if possible, for participants with limited mobility; and,
  - selecting a space for visits that is conducive to providing families and residents with privacy.
- ❑ Put signs up around the home, focusing on key areas where you will be accepting visitors when they arrive. Signage should include the following information:
  - how to wash hands or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer (please see Appendix A)
  - how to don/doff a mask properly (please see Appendix B)
  - physical distancing requirement (please see Appendix C)
  - expectations for visitors

## Prepare Your People for Visits – Communication with Staff

- ❑ Establish and communicate protocols for visits. This should enable all staff to know exactly how to safely receive and screen visitors, as well as manage visits for participants. Consider making this a visual handout. This should also include:

- clear, detailed steps on where to meet and screen visitors when they arrive (i.e., location inside or outside of the home)
- how to safely guide visitors to the designated visiting space
- how to conduct pre-visit screening
- how to schedule appointments
- allowed duration of visits
- how to monitor visits
- ❑ Establish protocols for visits with participants with mobility issues. This should include:
  - allowing indoor visits if participant is unable to leave premises or is unable to access an outdoor space for a private visit, or due to weather
  - consideration on how many staff are required for the identified visitor
  - which space will be allocated for visits to allow for physical distancing between staff and visitors
  - how to schedule appointments to ensure the participant has required staff supports for the duration of the visit, while maintaining appropriate staffing levels in the home for other participants
- ❑ Establish how you will communicate the visit scheduling process and guidelines with participants and families/support networks.
- ❑ Appoint a person within your team and identify a central email/or phone line to direct all visit scheduling inquiries from families/support networks.
- ❑ Establish a process to communicate to the team should a visitor notify the home that they have become ill with COVID-19 symptoms following a visit. Include all staff to keep everyone up to date. Prepare a memo ahead of time, if possible, to be used.
- ❑ Clarify a process (who and how) for staff to escalate concerns regarding visitors not following visitation guidelines.
- ❑ Establish and communicate a protocol for masking requirement for visits.

## Prepare Families and Support Networks for Visitation

- ❑ Communicate with families/support networks about how and when they can schedule a visit with their loved ones.
- ❑ Communicate with families that the default is for visits to take place outdoors, unless infeasible due to a participant's mobility or other support needs.
- ❑ Communicate with families/support networks on the permitted duration for outdoor visits.
  - Communicate with families/support networks the expectations for visits. This should include the need for visitors to wear a medical mask (provided by the facility) for **indoor visitation** or non-medical mask (outdoor visitation).
  - Communicate the protocols for pre-visit and on-site screening with families/support networks.

Service providers can find templates to communicate this information to families/support networks in **Appendix D**.

## Pre-Visit Screening

When scheduling a visit, staff must screen the potential visitor via phone for signs and symptoms of COVID-19.

As per guidelines:

- ❑ Screening for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 should be conducted for all visitors.
- ❑ Screening must occur prior to the visit.
- ❑ Visitors must indicate that they understand the possible impacts of COVID-19 and the need to follow physical distancing, where possible, and hand hygiene throughout the visit to prevent unknowing transmission of COVID-19 to participants.

**Note:** No visitor will be allowed to visit a participant unless they are determined as eligible based on the pre-visit screening procedure.

A pre-screening tool is provided in **Appendix E**.



## VISITS

When visitors arrive at the home for their scheduled visit with a participant, staff must receive them in the designated waiting area and accompany them to the designated visit area on the property of the home. Staff must monitor the visit and provide personal protective equipment to visitors, if necessary.

Each participant may now identify three (3) non-essential family/social visitors who will be able to attend indoor visitation who can have indoor visits one at a time.

The preference is for visits to continue to take place outdoors, unless infeasible due to a participant's mobility, other support needs, or due to weather.

On-site visits are intended to support the emotional and well-being of participants and are limited to the following restrictions:

- ❑ One (1) identified non-essential family/social visitor, per participant, per visit for indoor visitation.
- ❑ Up to five (5) visitors, per participant, per visit for outdoor visitation.

This visitor restriction applies only to external visitors and not to the number of staff who may be required to be present for the duration of the visit, such as additional support staff required for participant support.

### In-Person Screening

When visitors arrive for their scheduled visit, staff must screen them for signs and symptoms of COVID-19. Staff must screen visitors using the pre-screening tool (**Appendix E**).

Staff must keep a list of all visitors entering the home and document that they have been screened.

### Prevention Education and PPE – Participants and Visitors

Upon arrival, staff should provide education to visitors about the requirement for them to follow proper respiratory hygiene/coughing etiquette and hand hygiene for the duration of their visit. Staff should ensure visitors wash their hands before and after their visits.

For outdoor visits, visitors who have been determined as eligible to visit a participant must wear a non-medical mask – cloth and homemade masks are allowed – while moving through the premises to the designated visiting area. Once at the designated visit area, the non-medical mask may be removed at the discretion of the service provider.

For indoor visits, medical/procedural masks must be worn at all times.

If the use of non-medical masks presents as a barrier for effective communication between participants and their visitors, the masks may be removed if physical distancing can be maintained and at the discretion of the service provider.

Staff must inform visitors that, should they become ill in the two (2) weeks following their visit to the home, the visitor must contact 811 for screening and testing. Should the visitor test positive for COVID-19, the visitor must inform Public Health during their investigation that they visited the home.

## Physical Distancing

For the entire duration of the visit, staff must ensure that visitors maintain physical distancing of two (2) metres between themselves and the participant.

It is recognized that following physical distancing guidelines may be difficult for some participants. This should not preclude participants from being able to receive visitors and should not lead to visits being ended while in progress. Additional protective measures such as symptom screening, proper hand hygiene, limiting visits to two visitors, and using masks can help to reduce the risk of participants not being able to adhere to physical distancing guidelines.

## Supplies for Visitors

Certain supplies must be made available for visitors, by the home, including:

- Hand sanitizer
- Waste disposal receptacle
- Surgical masks for indoor visitation

## Appendix A: Handwashing Poster

# PROPER HAND WASHING

Washing your hands frequently with soap and water is the best way to reduce the spread of germs.



1  
Wet your hands with warm running water



2  
Add soap and scrub for 15-20 seconds



3  
Wash backs, thumbs, between fingers, and under nails



4  
Rinse off soap under running water



5  
Dry your hands with a clean towel



6  
Turn off tap with a towel

When soap and water are not available, alcohol-based hand sanitizers can be used if hands are not visibly soiled.

  
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# Appendix B: How to Wear a Non-Medical Fabric Mask Poster

## HOW TO WEAR A NON-MEDICAL FABRIC MASK SAFELY

[who.int/epi-win](http://who.int/epi-win)

### Do's →

-   
Clean your hands before touching the mask
-   
Inspect the mask for damage or if dirty
-   
Adjust the mask to your face without leaving gaps on the sides
-   
Cover your mouth, nose, and chin
-   
Avoid touching the mask
-   
Clean your hands before removing the mask
-   
Remove the mask by the straps behind the ears or head
-   
Pull the mask away from your face
-   
Store the mask in a clean plastic, resealable bag if it is not dirty or wet and you plan to re-use it
-   
Remove the mask by the straps when taking it out of the bag
-   
Wash the mask in soap or detergent, preferably with hot water, at least once a day
-   
Clean your hands after removing the mask

### Don'ts →

-   
Do not use a mask that looks damaged
-   
Do not wear a loose mask
-   
Do not wear the mask under the nose
-   
Do not remove the mask where there are people within 1 metre
-   
Do not use a mask that is difficult to breathe through
-   
Do not wear a dirty or wet mask
-   
Do not share your mask with others

**A fabric mask can protect others around you. To protect yourself and prevent the spread of COVID-19, remember to keep at least 1 metre distance from others, clean your hands frequently and thoroughly, and avoid touching your face and mask.**



## Appendix C: Physical Distancing Guidelines for Outdoor Visits

### GUIDELINES FOR OUTDOOR VISITS



We know this is a difficult time and everyone is eager to see their loved ones.

**For the safety of your loved ones, we need all visitors to keep 2 meters distance from residents, at all times.**

Please do not reach past the two-meter distance or pass items to/from residents during your outdoor visit.

## Appendix D: Communication Messaging and Letter Templates

### **Initial Letter to Families: Appointment to Visit a Participant**

We are very pleased to let you know that the Province of Nova Scotia is now allowing both indoor and outdoor visitation, by appointment only, to its licensed DSP homes.

I know our participants and families are eager to see their loved ones. We are looking forward to supporting in-person visits in designated areas within the facility and on facility grounds. For [insert name of facility], visits will take place in the [insert location]. Physical distancing rules apply, and visitors are expected to wear non-medical masks for outdoor visits and surgical/procedural masks for indoor visits.

At this point, the preference is to continue with outdoor visits, and only schedule indoor visits when required based on a participant's mobility or support needs.

Appointments will be scheduled in advance, and time limits will be in effect to ensure all participants who are able have a chance to visit with family. Visitation will be available only to participants who are not required to self-isolate and who are not demonstrating signs or symptoms of COVID-19.

If you wish to schedule a visit, please contact [Insert Name of Facility Contact Here] to book an appointment. Please note that only one designated non-essential family/support visitor can visit a resident at a time for indoor visitation. Up to five people can visit a participant at a time during outdoor visitation. You will be required to follow our procedures for visits, which is based on direction from the Department of Health and Wellness, Department of Community Services and the Chief Medical Officer of Health. Specific instructions will be provided to you when your appointment is booked.

## **Confirmation Letter: Appointment to Visit a Participant**

Dear [insert visitor name(s)]:

This is to confirm that you have an appointment to visit [insert resident name] on [insert date] at [insert time]. If for any reason, you need to cancel your visit, please call [insert number], providing as much notice as possible.

Your visit will take place in the [insert location]. Each visitor will be required to bring your own non-medical mask (homemade or purchased masks are sufficient) for outdoor visits and a surgical/procedural mask for indoor visits.

**Before your visit**, and in order for it to happen as scheduled, **you MUST**:

- arrive at your scheduled time and wait in the marked area
- undergo screening by a staff member for signs and symptoms, travel and potential exposure to COVID-19 in the past 14 days
- confirm that you understand the possible impacts of COVID-19 and the importance of physical distancing and hand hygiene to prevent unknowingly transmitting the virus to your loved one

**During the visit, you MUST**:

- allow physical distancing of two (2) metres between you and your loved ones.
- wear a mask
- practice strict respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene (visitors must wash hands/hand sanitize before and after the visit)
- wash hands/hand sanitize before and after visit

Should you become ill in the two weeks following your visit to a DSP home, you must contact 811 for screening and testing. Should you test positive for COVID-19, you must to inform public health during their investigation with you, that you have visited a DSP home.

**Note:** No visitor will be allowed to visit a participant unless they are determined as eligible based on the pre-visit screen.

**Please help keep your loved ones safe.**

We look forward to seeing you soon.

## Appendix E: Pre-Screening Tool for Visitors

Staff, please complete this checklist prior to scheduling a visit for families/support networks with participants.

<b>1. Do you have any of the following symptoms?</b>	Yes	No
Fever (or chills or sweats)	Yes	No
New or worsening of a previous cough	Yes	No
Sore throat	Yes	No
Headache	Yes	No
Shortness of breath	Yes	No
Muscle aches	Yes	No
New or worsening sneezing	Yes	No
New or worsening nasal congestion or runny nose	Yes	No
Hoarse voice	Yes	No
Diarrhea	Yes	No
Unusual fatigue	Yes	No
Loss of sense of smell or taste	Yes	No
Red, purple, or blueish lesions (spots) on the feet, toes, or fingers without clear cause?	Yes	No
<b>2. In the last 14 days, have you or someone in your household travelled outside Nova Scotia?</b>	Yes	No
<b>3. In the last 14 days, have you or someone in your household had close contact (i.e., within 2 metres / 6 feet) with someone confirmed to have COVID-19 infection?</b>	Yes	No
<b>4. Are you or anyone in your household awaiting results from a COVID-19 test?</b>	Yes	No



For staff:

**If the visitor has answered YES to any one of these questions, they are not permitted to visit at this time.**

If the visitor answered **YES** to **Question 1**, or if they have any questions, please direct the visitor to **contact 811**.

A visitor with chronic stable cough, sneeze, running nose, or nasal congestion that is unchanged and clearly linked to a known medical condition such as asthma or allergies may still be able to visit. Please discuss with your management team and call back the visitor with the final decision.