

	Policy: IC-1300-13	
	Last Reviewed: September 9, 2020	
	Last Revised: October 16, 2020	
Manual: Infection Prevention & Control	Approved by: Admin/ ICN	
Subject: COVID-19 Resident Absences	Division: LTC	Page 1 of 5

Policy:

McCormick Home is responsible for supporting resident short-stay or resident temporary absences.

Background:

McCormick Care Group provides staff direction on resident absences during the COVID-19 pandemic, in accordance with current legislation, regulations, standards and best practice guidelines. McCormick Home is responsible for establishing and implementing resident absences practices that comply with Directive #3.

Legislation/Regulations/Standards:

- Ontario Regulation 79/10 under the Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007
- Directive #3 for Long-Term Care Homes under the Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007
- Public Health Ontario

Note:

As the COVID-19 outbreak evolves, direction on resident absences will be adjusted as necessary by the Ministry of Long-Term Care, keeping the safety and well-being of residents and staff at the forefront. This policy was last updated on October 15, 2020.

Definitions:

1. **Short-term absences for social or other reasons that do not include an overnight stay.** A request must be submitted to and approved by the home. Upon return to the home, residents must be actively screened but are not required to be tested or self-isolate.
2. **Temporary absences for social or other reasons that include one or more nights.** A request must be submitted to and approved by the home. Upon return to the home, residents must be actively screened and self-isolate for 14 days.
3. **Medical absences for medical reasons (such as outpatient visits or a single night emergency room visits).** Homes cannot deny a resident's request to leave the home for medical visits. Residents do not require testing or self-isolation upon their return. If the resident is admitted to the hospital at any point or an emergency room visit takes place over two or more nights (after which the patient is discharged from hospital), homes will follow the steps outlined in the Re-admissions section of Directive #3.

Procedure:

As per Directive #3, all non-medical absences must be approved by the home. In the event of an outbreak in the home or where there is evidence of widespread community transmission as per provincial direction, absences will not be permitted except for medical or compassionate reasons.

1. The resident or substitute decision maker must make an absence request to the home. Homes must review and approve all non-medical absence requests based on a case-by-case risk assessment considering, but not limited to, the following:
 - a. The home's ability to support self-isolation for 14 days upon the resident's return.
 - b. Local disease transmission and activity.
 - c. The risks associated with the planned activities that will be undertaken by the resident while out of the home.
 - d. The resident's ability to comply with local and provincial policies/bylaws.
 - e. Any further direction provided by the Ministry of Long-Term Care.

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	Last Revised: October 16, 2020	
Manual: Infection Prevention & Control	Approved by: Admin/ ICN	
Subject: COVID-19 Resident Absences	Division: LTC	Page 2 of 5

For homes located in public health unit jurisdictions where there is evidence of widespread community transmission as per provincial direction, absences are not permitted except for medical or compassionate reasons.

Short-Term Absences:

Defined as leaving the home’s property for social or other reasons and do not include an overnight stay.

- A written request must be submitted to the home indicating the details of the visit and the health measures in place to protect the resident and others upon returning to the home.
 - Upon returning to the home, residents must be actively screened for signs and symptoms associated with COVID-19, but are not required to be tested or self-isolate.
 - Residents must be provided with a medical mask to be worn when outside of the home (if tolerated) and reminded about the importance of public health measures, including physical distancing and hand hygiene.
1. When the home receives a written request for a short-term absence, the information provided will be thoroughly reviewed and shared with the home’s liaison at the health unit for review and the opportunity to provide feedback or additional suggestions.
 2. The home will take into consideration the current local health unit recommendations placed on local community transmission, if applicable.
 3. If the request is approved, the charge nurse in the home area will be notified to document the approval in the day book. The staff will review public health safety measures (e.g., importance of wearing a mask, hand hygiene, social distancing, etc.) while the resident is out of the home.
 4. Families will be required to ensure they follow public health measures for themselves and the resident as much as possible and take every step necessary to protect their loved one, other residents and staff of the home (for example, wearing a mask for the duration of the outing and observing physical distancing protocols).
 5. If the home denies an absence request, the home must communicate this finding to the resident/substitute decision maker in writing, including the rationale for the decision. Residents whose request for an absence is denied but wish to go outside must remain on the home’s property and maintain a physical distance of at least two metres from any other resident or staff on the property.
 6. If the resident and/or substitute decision maker do not agree with the decision, they may submit an appeal.

Note: Upon return to the home, the completion of the screening tool **IC-1300-01 Resident screening following offsite outings**, which identifies a heightened risk of exposure to COVID-19, may place the resident in precautionary isolation to be monitored for signs and symptoms of COVID-19

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	Last Revised: October 16, 2020	
Manual: Infection Prevention & Control	Approved by: Admin/ ICN	
Subject: COVID-19 Resident Absences	Division: LTC	Page 3 of 5

Temporary Absences:

Defined as leaving the home’s property for social or other reasons that include one or more nights.

- A request must be submitted and approved by the home.
 - Upon return to the home, residents must be actively screened and self-isolate for 14 days.
 - Residents must be provided with a medical mask to be worn when outside of the home (if tolerated) and reminded about the importance of public health measures, including maintaining a safe distance of at least two metres from others and employing proper hand hygiene.
1. A written request must be submitted to the home indicating the details of the temporary absence and the health measures in place to protect the resident and others upon returning to the home.
 2. When the home receives a written request for a temporary absence, the information provided will be thoroughly reviewed and shared with the home’s liaison at the health unit for review and the opportunity to provide feedback or additional suggestions.
 3. The home will take into consideration the current local health unit recommendations in place for local community transmission, if applicable.
 4. If the request is approved, the charge nurse in the home area will be notified to document the approval in the day book. The staff will review public health safety measures (e.g., importance of wearing a mask, hand hygiene, social distancing, etc.) while the resident is out of the home.
 5. Families will be required to ensure they follow public health measures for themselves and the resident as much as possible and take every step necessary to protect their loved one, other residents and staff of the home (for example, wearing a mask for the duration of the outing and observing physical distancing protocols).
 6. If the home denies a temporary absence request, the home must communicate this finding to the resident/substitute decision maker in writing, including the rationale for the decision. Residents whose request for an absence is denied but wish to go outside must remain on the home’s property and maintain a physical distance of at least two metres from any other resident or staff on the property.
 7. If the resident and/or substitute decision maker do not agree with the decision, they may submit an appeal.

Medical Absences:

Defined as leaving the home’s property for medical reasons (e.g., outpatient visits, single night emergency room visits).

- Homes cannot deny a resident’s request to leave the home for medical visits.
- Residents do not require testing or self-isolation upon their return.
- Emergency room visits that take place over a single night (i.e., assessment and discharge from the emergency department spans one overnight period) are considered equivalent to an outpatient medical visit and do not require testing or self-isolation upon return.

	Policy: IC-1300-13	
	Last Reviewed: September 9, 2020	
	Last Revised: October 16, 2020	
Manual: Infection Prevention & Control	Approved by: Admin/ ICN	
Subject: COVID-19 Resident Absences	Division: LTC	Page 4 of 5

- Residents must be provided with a medical mask to be worn when outside of the home (if tolerated) and reminded about the importance of public health measures, including maintaining a safe distance of at least two metres from others and maintaining proper hand hygiene.

If the resident is admitted to the hospital at any point or discharged after two or more nights in the emergency room, homes will follow the steps outlined under the Re-admissions section of Directive #3.

Appeal Process for Residents, Families and Caregivers:

In the event that a resident, substitute decision maker and/or caregiver disagree with a determination of the clinical team's decision to revoke or decline a resident absence, the following process will be followed:

- The resident, substitute decision maker or caregiver will submit a written letter outlining their disagreement with the decision to any member of the leadership team.
- The notice will go to the administrator, who will review the details of the concern and make every attempt to rectify the concern. The administrator may include the medical director, social worker, BSO representative, Family Council representative, and/or Resident Council representative as resources to support solution-finding and decision-making.
- If no resolution is achieved, the concern will go to the McCormick Care Group CEO, who will make the final determination regarding the concern and communicate this finding to all the parties involved.

Education:

Family members/friends are encouraged to review the Family Visitor Guidelines and Education Resources for COVID-19 prior to taking their loved one off the property. The documents contain education around public health measures and infection control guidelines.

- McCormick Home **Family Visitor Guidelines and Education Resources for COVID-19** are available in hard copy from the screener or located on our website at www.mccormickhome.ca.
- Resources from Public Health Ontario are available through links on our website:
 - Recommended Steps: Putting on Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/ipac/ppe-recommended-steps>
 - Putting on Full Personal Protective Equipment <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/videos/ipac-fullppe-on>
 - Taking off Full Personal Protective Equipment <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/videos/ipac-fullppe-off>
 - How to Hand Wash <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/videos/ipac-handwash>

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Manual: Infection Prevention & Control	Approved by: Admin/ ICN	
Subject: COVID-19 Resident Absences	Division: LTC	Page 5 of 5

Outcome:

Enhancing the quality of life of residents of McCormick Home while maintaining the safety and reducing the risk of COVID-19.

Accountability:

All registered staff and members of the management team are responsible to ensure compliance with this policy.

References:

- Directive #3 for Long-Term Care Homes under the Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007
- Frequently Asked Questions for Resident Absences under COVID-19 Directive #3 for Long-Term Care Homes under the Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007, released October 14, 2020