

Wednesday, September 9, 2020

RE: Visitor Guidelines: Re-Opening of Congregate Living Settings

To all Families and Members,

The **Ministry of Community, Children and Social Services (MCCSS)** has released an update which builds upon the guidelines for congregate living settings, including group homes. Under these new guidelines, members **may leave** their homes for a short- stay or essential overnight absence to maintain their social, emotional wellbeing and quality of life.

Short-stay absences - are day “outings” that maybe healthcare related or maybe socially based (i.e. visiting family) etc. but they do not include an overnight stay.

Overnight absences are for **essential and extraordinary reasons** that are for an overnight stay. Approvals for essential overnight absences are based on a case-by-case risk assessment.

As mentioned, there is a provision for **essential overnight** absences in the communication received by MCCSS. It is important to note these are for extraordinary circumstances where the person’s health, safety and/or wellbeing have been impacted. These requests will be reviewed on a case by case basis with the **Program Supervisor** and their Manager and/or Director. With that said, after any overnight absence we require a **14-day enhanced precaution period**.

We are thrilled to extend this news to our members and their families; however, we **NEED** to proceed with extreme caution to ensure the health and safety of your family member, their staff, and your family. We all need to work together to ensure the following safety measures and universal precautions set out by Public Health (see below). If families or individuals are **not respecting** the safety processes and protocols visits will be revisited and potentially **discontinued**. We will address these on a case by case basis and will be monitoring closely.

We are encouraging families to examine their **own social circles** when preparing for a **short stay or overnight visit**. Please avoid expanding the number of people in your circle and be mindful of crowded areas in the **community**. If your family member is unable to tolerate a mask, we encourage you to **avoid locations** that require the use of them.

If you are interested in scheduling a **short stay absence**, please see the attached guidelines for each visit, and connect directly with the Program Supervisor of the residential location. We have also put together a short stay and **essential overnight checklist** that must be completed when you arrive. Please note that these guidelines may be put on hold if the risk of **COVID-19** has increased or otherwise advised by our Ministry or Public Health.

Thank you and be safe,



Adam Smith
Executive Director
Vita CLS and Mens Sana Families For Mental Health

September 9, 2020 - MCCSS Guidelines for Families: Short Stay Absences

These safeguards are being put in place to maintain the health, safety and wellbeing of your family member, their support staff and your family. These key measures have been shown to be effective and must be practiced diligently.

- Active Screening
- Proper Hand Hygiene
- Reasonable Physical Distancing
- The use of masks or face coverings
- Avoiding indoor crowded spaces

Families who are interested in bringing their loved one for a short stay must review the guidelines below and speak directly to the Program Supervisor of the residential location to make the necessary arrangements.

Plans are subject to change based on the current pandemic status within our community. These guidelines may be put on hold if the risk of COVID-19 has increased or otherwise advised by our Ministry or Public Health. **ALL VISITS WILL BE SUSPENDED** during an **OUTBREAK**.

You are a part of our VITA team! We ask you to consider all your interactions and be as safe as possible. Here are **considerations for short - stay absences**:

1. Limit interactions with others that are not in your social circle. Please do not expand your 'bubble' to others.

2. Planning is required to keep everyone safe. Please provide a **minimum of 48-hour notice** prior to any short-stay absences.
3. **Transportation:** We encourage one person to pick up and drop off your family member from their home. Please maintain physical distancing measures when in the vehicle including use of face masks.
4. **Wear a MASK:** The family and your loved one must wear masks for the duration of the community outing or home visit as maintaining social distance may be unavoidable. If your loved one has difficulty wearing a mask, it is even more important that all other family members wear masks. If there is a meal at the family home, arrangements should be made to be at least 2 meters away from others. Remember some places require mandatory face covering. If this is an issue for your family member, we encourage you to call ahead to ensure they can accommodate.
5. **Hand Hygiene** is important. Please ensure that you and your family member engage in frequent hand washing or hand sanitizing practices. This is key both in the community (touching objects such as doors, railings etc.) and in your home.
6. **Plan your community outing carefully** It is important **not** to attend crowded events or have contact with multiple people. The more exposure your family member has to others, the greater the risk to all individuals they live with and our staff. If you are planning a family visit to your home, it is important to only have a very small number of your family present.

Steps to Arrange a Short-Stay Visit

1. Contact the Program Supervisor of the residential location to organize the visit. Please provide a minimum of **48-hour notice** prior to any short-stay absences.
2. Please provide all details for the short stay visit. This will allow us to have full and complete understanding to assist in preparing your family member. The Program Supervisor will also review our **COVID 19 precautionary measures** directed by Public Health.
3. Following **successful** precautionary measure screenings and short stay details are confirmed, the **Program Supervisor** may approve the visit.

On the day of the visit:

1. Call the home when you arrive so the staff can arrange to bring your family member to the front door.
2. Staff will step outside the front door with the short-stay checklist and sign off
3. Staff will review each point with you. If you need more information, do not hesitate to ask.
4. After the screening, both you and the staff will sign that you agree to follow all precautionary measures.
5. Have a great visit!
6. When you are returning – please call the location to advise on the time you will be arriving. Staff will ask about your family member’s health and if you noticed any symptoms or health issues during the visit. *This is an important step for screening prior to them returning to the location*
7. Please place any personal items of your family member in a plastic bag to be given to the staff.
8. The staff will greet you at the door and you will say your goodbyes to your family member until the next visit.

After the visit:

If you suspect or have confirmation that during the visit your family member may have been exposed to COVID-19, please contact the Program Supervisor **immediately**.