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June 7, 2021

MEMORANDUM

TO: Executive Directors
MCCSS Transfer Payment Recipients

FROM: Sandra Russell, Director - North Region
Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services

SUBJECT: **Interim direction – Brief Physical Contact and Recreational Activities**

I am writing to advise you of important updates to MCCSS-issued guidance for congregate living settings related to:

- brief physical contact with visitors; and
- recreational activities (non-essential short-stay absences) for residents outside of the congregate living setting.

As you know, the health and safety of congregate care residents, including their mental and emotional well-being, remain our top priority. With recent improvements in Ontario's key COVID-19 related public health indicators, including an increase in vaccination rates and a decline in community transmission rates, the ministry can now support the resumption of certain activities that foster social connection for residents.

These changes may take effect **June 9, 2021** for settings unless the local public health unit (PHU) has advised otherwise as part of outbreak management.

Brief physical contact with visitors:

- Residents and visitors, regardless of vaccination status, are permitted to engage in brief physical contact (e.g., a hug) during indoor or outdoor visits. This includes essential and non-essential visitors.
- The requirement for visitors to wear eye protection and a surgical/procedure mask at all times remains in place.
- Despite masking exemptions, where feasible, residents are strongly encouraged to wear a surgical/procedure mask also.
- Non-essential visitors must maintain physical distance (2 meters/6 feet) before and after physical contact.

Recreational Activities (Short Stay Absences):

- Residents are permitted to leave the congregate living setting for a short-stay (i.e. same day) absence in the community in alignment with provincial parameters as outlined in the Re-Opening Ontario Act and related orders.
- This will now include recreational outings (activities for pleasure) in addition to essential absences (e.g., work, school, medical appointment, physical exercise).
- Please see the *MCCSS Visitors Guidelines 3.0: Re-Opening of Congregate Care Settings* for protocols/requirements re short stay absences for residents.

With the exception of the changes outlined above, all MCCSS COVID-19 guidance for congregate settings remains in effect and service providers with congregate living settings are to continue to follow the **ENHANCED** precautions.

This includes:

- MCCSS Visitor's Guidelines 3.0: Re-Opening of Congregate Care Settings
- MCCSS Operational Guidelines for Universal Source Control 2.0
- MCCSS COVID-19 Enhanced Precautions level restrictions/permissions.

The ministry will continue to review emerging evidence in collaboration with health system partners and technical experts from Public Health Ontario and within the health system to understand the most appropriate measures to take moving forward.

Note for TPR operators of youth justice open and secure custody/detention facilities: the above noted changes do not apply to youth justice open and secure custody/detention facilities. Please continue to follow existing direction which can be found on the following government [website](#).

Please share this communication broadly with any/all providers that your organization contracts/sub-contracts with to provide congregate living supports.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your MCCSS program supervisor.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sandra Russell".

Sandra Russell
Director, North Region