

Version	Date	Comments / Changes
1.0	October 2020	Initial Clinical Protocol Released

## PURPOSE

This protocol for essential off-site medical appointments during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic will provide guidance to Long-Term Care (LTC) and Assisted Living (AL) Teams (e.g. Most Responsible Practitioners (MRPs), Nurses, Director of Care (DOC), AL Clinical Lead etc.), residents/tenants, and families on:

- How to determine if an off-site medical appointment is necessary;
- How to minimize the risk of COVID-19 exposure and transmission during residents'/tenants' transportation to an essential off-site medical appointment and;
- How to proceed with safe transport of a resident/tenant to an essential off-site medical appointment.

## 1. BACKGROUND

Approximately 8 in 10 COVID-19-related deaths in Canada have occurred in LTC<sup>4</sup>. A strong body of literature confirms that COVID-19 adds many new risks to the health of older adults. As the pandemic has spread quickly around the globe, it has become increasingly clear that people over the age of 70 with underlying chronic medical conditions are most at risk of a serious or fatal illness after contracting COVID-19. In addition, these same people living in congregate LTC and Assisted Living (AL) settings are at greater risk still due to their daily care needs<sup>2</sup>. It is important for protective measures to be sustained even during residents'/tenants' temporary absences from the home to protect LTC/AL residents/tenants from COVID-19 (e.g. for essential off-site medical appointments).

A palliative approach to care in LTC continues during the COVID-19 pandemic and contributes to the decision-making into whether or not a medical appointment is essential for a resident/tenant.

## 2. DEFINITIONS

**Designated family member:** The identified person as per the resident's/tenant's care plan.

**Essential medical appointment:** A medical appointment the resident/tenant must attend in order to enable resolution of an urgent, episodic medical issue, decrease the need for an ER visit or hospitalization, or if delaying the appointment could lead to serious harm.

**Family:** Defined as whoever the resident/tenant identifies as being important, or identifies as being his or her family, including blood relations, partners, neighbours, and/or friends (Fraser Health, 2016).

**Representative:** A person named by a capable adult in a Representation Agreement to make health care decisions on behalf of the adult if they become incapable<sup>5</sup>.

**Third party medical transportation:** Non-Fraser Health transportation service available for people who are medically stable (i.e. HandyDART and SN Transfer).

**3. RELATED RESOURCES**

[Medical Orders for Scope of Treatment and Advance Care Planning – Clinical Policy](#)

[Long-Term Care, Assisted Living COVID-19 Resource Toolkit](#)

[Integrating a Palliative Approach to Care in Long-Term Care – Clinical Practice Guideline](#)

**4. APPLICATION PARAMETERS**

This protocol applies to staff and residents/tenants in Fraser Health LTC and AL Affiliated and Owned & Operated care homes.

For any essential off-site medical appointment, there will be communication as far in advance as possible of the appointment between the resident/tenant, and family (or substitute decision maker) and health care team (e.g. Most Responsible Practitioners (MRPs), Nurses, Director of Care (DOC) etc.).

**5. ASSESSMENT**

Determine whether the appointment is consistent with the resident's/tenant's goals of care and clinically necessary. Refer to the [Long-Term Care, Assisted Living COVID-19 Resource Toolkit](#) in the section titled Admissions and Transfers: Essential Medical Appointments and the section titled Clinical Practice Resources: Serious Illness Conversation.

**What is considered an essential medical appointment?**

In order to support decision-making related to resident/tenant health and safety, prior to allowing off-site health related visits, the following questions should be considered and discussed amongst the care team to determine if the visit is essential.

	No	Yes
Can the appointment be done virtually OR the health issue(s) be managed by the MRP or by an existing staff member?		
Can the appointment be provided on-site, instead of off-site?		
<b>If answered YES to any of the questions <u>do not proceed</u> with off-site visit. If answered No, proceed to next questions.</b>		

	No	Yes
Would the medical appointment enable resolution of an acute and/or urgent episodic medical issue? (e.g. worsening wounds, foot care which if left untreated would result in infection or further burden of care, broken tooth)		
Would the service reduce the immediate or very near-future need for an ER visit or hospitalization?		
Would delaying the appointment lead to increased morbidity and/or serious harm for the resident/tenant?		
<b>If answered Yes to the questions above then proceed with off-site essential medical appointments.</b>		

Fraser Health's LTC/AL residents/tenants are routinely screened for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 a minimum of two times per day (Fraser Health COVID-19 Screening Process for Long-Term Care, 2020).

In addition, care providers need to follow the appropriate set of procedures below depending on the results of the screening for off-site medical appointments.

## 6. INTERVENTIONS

### When transporting an asymptomatic resident/tenant:

- a) **Recommended method:** If it is determined that the appointment should go ahead, it is recommended that resident/tenant be transported by an approved third party transportation company in order to ensure proper infection prevention control measures are followed.
- b) **Transporting by Family Member:** If transport of the resident/tenant by a family member is deemed appropriate and necessary, the following procedures should be reviewed with the resident/tenant and family member in advance of the appointment.
- The designated family member must be capable of complying with appropriate precautions, including infection prevention and control measures.
  - The designated family member is responsible for contacting the medical clinic in advance to determine what additional guidelines should be followed during the clinic appointment.
  - The designated family member will be actively screened by the care home staff at the entrance for all signs and symptoms of COVID-19 prior to being allowed to transport the resident/tenant. The nurse will document the outcome of the family member screening on the resident/tenant health record.
  - If the designated family member is identified with symptoms via screening, the screener staff will inform the leadership at the care home and they must NOT be allowed to transport the resident/tenant.
  - Only the designated family member may be involved in transporting the resident/tenant if possible, but an exception can be made if that family member is not suited to provide the transportation (i.e. does not have a driver's license, is not physically able to assist the resident/tenant in and out of the vehicle)
  - No other individuals other than the designated family member and the resident/tenant should be in the vehicle.
  - The resident/tenant MUST be transported directly to the appointment and back to the care home/AL site. No additional stops should be made.

### **Designated family member transporting a resident/tenant to an essential off-site appointment must be instructed:**

- On how to practice respiratory etiquette, hand hygiene and physical distancing as appropriate (i.e. maintaining at least 2 metres distance from others at all times).
- That both the resident/tenant and designated family member should wear a mask at all times when possible.
- To sign in and out when leaving and returning to the LTC/AL site.
- That the vehicle used for transport should be wiped down with disinfectant prior to transporting a resident/tenant.

The resident/tenant should wash hands and change clothes upon return to the home.

**When transporting a symptomatic resident/tenant:**

- Symptomatic residents/tenants should have their appointments rescheduled whenever possible. This includes residents/tenants who have been tested for COVID-19 and are awaiting results as well as those who test positive.
- If the appointment is absolutely necessary (e.g. dialysis), the receiving site (e.g. dialysis clinic) must be notified that the resident/tenant is symptomatic and swab results pending and follow additional steps required to safely accommodate the resident/tenant and protect others at the clinic (e.g. re-scheduling the resident's/tenant's appointment to end of day).
- A symptomatic resident/tenant should be:
  - Prepared for transfer by applying a surgical/procedural mask if tolerated
  - Transported via an approved third party transportation company only
  - On Droplet Precautions upon return to the home.
- Family members are **NOT** permitted to transport residents/tenants who are symptomatic, have a swab result pending, or are COVID-19 positive.

**7. EDUCATION****Resident/Tenant and Family Member**

- Be aware of and follow the instructions to minimize risks of COVID-19 exposure and transmission

**Staff**

- Be familiar with the Essential Off-site for Medical Appointment Transportation Protocol
- Provide resident/tenant and family members with credible resources on COVID-19, such as the ones provided by the BC Centre for Disease Control (link below) and/or Fraser Health.

**8. DOCUMENTATION**

- The assessment findings and interventions will be communicated to all the healthcare team members and documented on the resident's/tenant's health record as well as in the care plan.
- Staff will follow the care homes'/AL's process and documentation required for residents/tenants going off-site.

**9. CLINICAL OUTCOMES**

Through the consistent use of this protocol, it is anticipated that rates of COVID-19 will not increase among residents/tenants of Fraser Health Long-Term Care and Assisted-Living Affiliated and Owned & Operated care homes who attend essential off-site medical appointments.

Health care team members (e.g. MRP, DOC, nurse, AL Clinical Lead) at the care home/AL site will be equipped to determine if an off-site medical appointment is necessary and be able to minimize the risk of COVID-19 exposure and transmission during resident/tenant transportation to appointments.

## 10. REFERENCES

1. British Columbia Centre for Disease Control (2020). COVID-19 Cleaning and Disinfecting. Available from <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/prevention-risks/cleaning-and-disinfecting>
2. British Columbia Centre for Disease Control, (July 20, 2020). Infection prevention and control interim guidance for COVID-19 for long-term care and assisted living facilities. Available from [http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/COVID19\\_LongTermCareAssistedLiving.pdf](http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/COVID19_LongTermCareAssistedLiving.pdf)
3. British Columbia Centre for Disease Control (2020). COVID-19 Prevention: Masks. Retrieved from <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/prevention-risks/masks>
4. Canadian Foundation for Health Care Improvement (July 2020). Reimagining care for older adults next steps in COVID-19 response in long-term care and retirement homes what we heard. Available from <https://www.cfhi-fcass.ca/about/news-and-stories/news-detail/2020/07/20/re-imagining-care-for-older-adults-next-steps-in-covid-19-response-in-long-term-care-and-retirement-homes>
5. Fraser Health Authority (2017). Medical Orders for Scope of Treatment and Advance Care Planning Policy. [https://pulse/clinical/specialized-community-services/Documents%20%20Palliative%20approach%20to%20care%20resources/MOST\\_and\\_Advance\\_Care\\_Planning\\_Policy.pdf](https://pulse/clinical/specialized-community-services/Documents%20%20Palliative%20approach%20to%20care%20resources/MOST_and_Advance_Care_Planning_Policy.pdf)
6. Fraser Health Authority (2018). Integrating a Palliative Approach to Care Clinical Practice Guideline. Available from <https://pulse/clinical/dst/DST%20Library/Integrating%20a%20Palliative%20Approach%20to%20Care%20in%20Long-Term%20Care%20-%20Clinical%20Practice%20Guideline/CPG.pdf>
7. Fraser Health Authority (2020). Long-Term Care, Assisted Living COVID-19 Resources Toolkit. Available from [https://www.fraserhealth.ca/-/media/Project/FraserHealth/FraserHealth/employees/clinical-resources/coronavirus-information/ltc-al-li/LTC\\_AL\\_COVID-Resource-Toolkit.pdf](https://www.fraserhealth.ca/-/media/Project/FraserHealth/FraserHealth/employees/clinical-resources/coronavirus-information/ltc-al-li/LTC_AL_COVID-Resource-Toolkit.pdf)
8. Island Health COVID-19 Guideline: Essential Health Visits in Long-term Care. Available from <https://medicalstaff.islandhealth.ca/sites/default/files/covid-19/long-term-care/essential-health-visits-long-term-care.pdf>