



Guidelines for Families – Short-Stay Absences

September 2, 2020

Dear Reena Family Member,

On August 28th, The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services released new guidelines. These guidelines are related to short-stay absences and essential overnight absences.

With the gradual reopening, there is the need to balance safeguarding the health and safety of the people we support and staff. The key measures have been shown to be effective must be practiced diligently:

- ✓ Rigorous hand hygiene
- ✓ Respiratory etiquette
- ✓ Active screening
- ✓ Wearing a mask
- ✓ Reasonable physical distancing measures

Families who are interested in having their family member home during the day or taking them to an appointment or errand are to review the below guidelines and then contact their Supervisor to plan in advance and make arrangements.

As previously mentioned, there is a provision for essential overnight absences as well in the Ministry communication. It is important to note these are for extraordinary circumstances where the person's health and safety are impacted. This is due to risk as well as the requirement for them to follow enhanced precautions for 14 days. Families would contact the Supervisor and each request would be considered case by case.

Similar to our other guidelines, they are subject to change based on the pandemic status in our community. These guidelines may need to be on hold if the risk for COVID increases as advised by our Ministry, Public Health, Ministry of Health and our Infectious Disease Specialist.

If the location is in outbreak or precautions, any short stay absences will need to be rescheduled until the location has been cleared by public health.

Considerations for Short-Stay Absences:

1. Planning is important and keeps everyone safe. Please allow at least 3 working days from your request to the activity or visit.

2. You are part of the team! We ask you to consider all your interactions and be as safe as possible – limit interactions with others that are not in your “bubble”. This is not the time to expand your “bubble” to others. Wear a mask diligently in all situations where it is necessary and know how to safely put it on and take it off. (see [How to Wear a Mask factsheet](#))
3. The safety measures for your son, daughter and sibling must continue when they leave the location with you. It begins with transportation. Please only have one person come to pick up your family member at the location. Both your family member and yourself will wear a mask and they will sit alone in the backseat. The windows should be open to provide good ventilation.
4. The family/friends must wear masks along with the person. This must take place at all times at home (since close contact will be unavoidable) and in the community. If there is a meal at the family home, then arrangements need to be made to have the person at least 2 metres away from others. If the individual has difficulty wearing a mask in the family home, it is even more important that all other family members wear masks and very diligently. If the person has difficulty wearing a mask, please do not assume that people in the community will understand. If you have an appointment or errand with your family member, please call in advance to ensure they are aware that they have challenges wearing a mask. They may need to work with you to develop a safe way to provide the service. This is important to avoid being denied entry or having an uncomfortable interaction.
5. Hand hygiene is so important and I know many of you carry hand sanitizer with you wherever you go. Please ensure that your family member (and yourself) have excellent and frequent hand washing or hand sanitizing. This is key both in the community (touching objects such as doors, railings etc) and at your home. Your family member may need to have frequent cueing and offering them the hand sanitizer often will be important. (see [Hand Hygiene Fact Sheet](#))
6. Plan your community outing carefully. It is important not to attend crowded events or come into 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 so important to only have a very small number of your family present.

Steps to Arrange a Short-Stay Visit

1. Contact the Supervisor (or back-up Supervisor if they are away) well in advance of your plans.
2. Discuss your plans with details. The more details the better since this helps us understand fully what safety precautions you are taking and any risks
3. Be open to having a good back-and-forth discussion with the Supervisor around how to make your plans even safer. This may seem a bit intrusive but during COVID asking personal questions is important to assess safety.
4. Once everything is in place and the Supervisor has agreed to the plan, set the date and time for pick up at the location as well as when you are returning.

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 (see email attachment)
3. Staff will review each point and please ask any questions. If you need more information, do not hesitate to ask.
4. After the review, both yourself and the staff will sign that you agree to follow all safety protocols.
5. Have a great visit!
6. When you are returning – call the location and let them know you are coming (approximate time). Please let the staff know about the visit – they may ask questions about how things went, any challenges or concerns. This helps with planning future visits and adapting for more safety if needed. They will also ask you about your family member’s health and if you noticed any symptoms or health issues. This is really important 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 become aware either during the visit or afterwards that your family member may have been exposed to COVID-19, notify the Supervisor of the location immediately.