

10 September 2020

Dear people we support and families,

In our last letter, we shared that the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services lifted a number of restrictions. These restrictions centred on visiting with friends and family, attending school, shopping, errands, appointments, and essential overnight absences.

A few updates have been added to the initial release from MCCSS, [which is available in its entirety here](#).

With these changes, we consulted Wellington Dufferin Guelph Public Health, as well as our Lessening Restrictions Committee, and our leadership team to understand how we can move each of these areas forward.

Today, we would like to introduce to you [Lessening Restrictions – Phase 4](#).

This phase focuses on Short-Stay Absences and Essential Overnight Absences. It outlines the safety guidelines we have put into place for the people we support and anyone involved in the absences. These safety guidelines are progressive, and rely on our region remaining in Stage 3 of Re-Opening Ontario. They are also meant to protect the good health of the person enjoying the absence, as well as everyone living and working at the residence they will return to.

So what's a Short-Stay Absence?

It could be attending a volunteer opportunity or a private day program. It could be visiting with friends or family during the day. It could be meeting a friend at a restaurant for dinner or running an errand. A Short-Stay Absence is going out with purpose, and an opportunity to promote emotional-wellbeing for the person supported.

These absences are flexible, but we want to be thoughtful about impact. Each time someone joins a community activity, they increase their contact with others and potentially increase the risk of being exposed to COVID-19. For now, we are encouraging activities, but asking that some thoughtfulness be given to just doing one or two activities per day for right now.

For the time being, transportation to and from a Short-Stay Absence will be by CLGW staff. Families may also want to be involved in the transportation and will be expected to follow our Lessening Restrictions – Phase 2 guidelines. Public transportation and other communal vehicles are not recommended at this time, as there is a possible increased risk of COVID-19 exposure. Taxis may be used in the event that no other private transportation can be arranged.

If the person needs support while participating in their Short-Stay Absence (i.e. employment support, support while volunteering), this will be reviewed on a case by case basis with the residence's supervisor to ensure we have enough staffing to support the needs of everyone.

Direct Support Professionals will help the person supported learn about, and understand the safety guidelines they need to follow while participating in a Short-Stay Absence.

Essential Overnight Absences and **Enhanced Precautions**

Spending a night at the family home, or enjoying a weekend away from the residence can help promote good mental health.

Upon returning from an Essential Overnight Absence, a 14-day **Enhanced Precautions** is now required. Please take a moment to read through Lessening Restrictions – Phase 4, to understand what all is involved expected in **Enhanced Precautions**.

When essential overnight absences are scheduled, families will be asked the questions included in [SA38 Visitor Guidelines](#). These questions include how many people may be frequenting your family home, and how many people the person supported might come into contact with. We cannot limit the number of people the person supported sees while home, but if we work together to keep the cohort small and manageable, it will help in the event someone does become ill.

For someone participating in an essential overnight absence, they may also participate in Short-Stay Absences during their 14-day Enhanced Precautions. Again, thoughtfulness around the number of activities someone is participating in will be our most effective measure to ensure the health and wellbeing of everyone living in a residence.

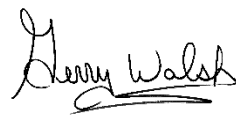
In the MCCSS release, you will notice a new 'visitor type', called Designated Visitor. At this time, we're doing a little more research and planning around who exactly would be a designated visitor, and how best to roll this out.

We appreciate your patience and understanding as we navigate this next phase of Lessening Restrictions. While this is a progressive change, we will be consulting with WDG Public Health frequently to see if we need to make adjustments to our preventative measures. This may mean tightening up on some restrictions again, or progressing a little quicker than you might expect. We're always here, and open to feedback, questions and concerns. Together, we hope that we can safely see our community thrive again.

We will continue to keep you informed of any new developments, and you can read the latest at: clgw.ca/covid19

Regards,


Laura Hanley
Executive Director


Gerry Walsh
Board President