



The VOICE of Albertans with Disabilities

May 7, 2020

Celebrating and encouraging volunteers during COVID-19

Volunteers are the foundation of our community life, and Alberta is proud to celebrate the incredible contributions Albertans make through a wide range of volunteering activities – whether simply caring for one another, or pitching in to help our local community organizations support those that are most vulnerable.

Albertans have been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic but continue to demonstrate resilience and compassion for one another during this time of crisis. Premier Jason Kenney has issued a call to Albertans to help out however they can during this time of crisis, recognizing that our first priority is the health and safety of Albertans. All Albertans are encouraged to follow the advice of Chief Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Deena Hinshaw, for social distancing, limiting the number of people in public spaces and wearing masks in crowded places. Guidelines for safe volunteering are available on [Alberta.ca/COVID-19](https://alberta.ca/COVID-19).

As a key organization working to build our community and support our volunteers, we ask for your support to encourage Albertans to find appropriate and safe volunteering opportunities to help us through this crisis. Many resources and opportunities for volunteering are available by:

- Visiting the new Alberta Cares Connector website to find volunteer opportunities. We also encourage organizations to post opportunities. And, if your resources are strapped at this time, consider engaging a volunteer to help post your opportunities!
- Directing Albertans to 211 Alberta's resource and referral network for local opportunities.

If you know of some great things happening in your community in response to COVID-19, we hope you will consider nominating an individual, a group of people or an organization for the new Alberta Northern Lights Volunteer Award. The program is intended to recognize and celebrate the amazing spirit, resilience and kindness of Albertans during a time of COVID-19. The nomination is designed for ease of access, requesting that you go online at Alberta Northern Lights Volunteer Recognition Program and submit a short 300-word story about the person or group you want to nominate. Please help us to recognize the incredible contributions of Albertans during this time!

Lastly, I know that Alberta's non-profits are experiencing significant impacts and challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Alberta government and federal govern-

ment have a number of supports in place to assist legally incorporated non-profits and registered charities.

This includes faith-based groups as well

as organizations related to sports and recreation, arts and culture, the environment, newcomer settlement, housing, social services, community development, education and research, volunteerism, unions, and professional associations. Please see the COVID-19 Support for the non-profit/voluntary sector fact sheet outlining the current available supports that I hope you will find useful.

Sincerely,

Leela Sharon Aheer

Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women

Financial Relief & Government Programs

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Alberta has declared a state of emergency under the Public Health Act. As a result, we are experiencing a higher-than-usual volume of emails. Please call 310-4455 from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., 7 days a week for questions about financial relief and government programs and services.

For assistance regarding the Emergency Isolation Support payment or federal COVID-19 benefits visit alberta.ca/covid19 or canada.ca/covid-19 for the latest and most accurate information.

Important phone numbers

If you require emergency supports to meet basic needs, income support is available 24-7.

- Income Support Contact Centre: 1-866-644-5135
- For anyone facing family violence, bullying or abuse, the





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following resources are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, in more than 170 languages:

- Family Violence Info Line: 310-1818
- Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-387-KIDS (5437)
- Bullying Helpline: 1-888-456-2323

Help is also available 24-7 for anyone dealing with mental health challenges.

- Mental Health Help Line: 1-877-303-2642
- You can also contact the Alberta Supports Contact Centre at 1-877-644-9992 (toll free) or 780-644-9992 (Edmonton Local) for information regarding AISH, Child Care Subsidy, Disability Supports, Financial Supports, Health Benefits, Career Information, Seniors Benefits, Public Guardian/Trustee.

Office of the Minister, Alberta Community and Social Services, 780-643-6210

CMOH Health Order Visitor Restrictions

Q&A: Order 14 Visitor Policy

Q. My loved one is a continuing care or licenced supportive living resident. Am I allowed to visit?

A. At this time we are permitting designated essential visitors:

- Where the resident's quality of life and/or care needs cannot be met without their assistance, or
- When a resident is dying

Q. Are all designated essential visitors permitted entry to the facilities where their loved one lives?

A. Designated essential visitors are only permitted entry if a resident is at the end of their life, or to provide essential care and support if staff are unable to do so. Designated essential visitors must talk with the operator about the resident's unmet needs, and their ability to assist, to determine if you are permitted entry.

All visits must be pre-arranged with the operator. Designated essential visitors cannot just show up at the facility and expect to be permitted entry.

Q. My loved one is a continuing care or licenced supportive living resident and is dying/palliative. Am I allowed to visit?

A. We expect that individuals who are dying should have the opportunity to have their family/visitors at their side while following the guidelines in place to ensure everyone's safety. Visitors are limited to one at a time (with the exception of when a child is accompanied, or if the room

is of a sufficient size to accommodate two visitors who can be two metres distant from each other, two visitors may attend at the same time).

- The policy is not intended to limit visits to the final hours or days before death.
- While it is difficult to be precise around when an individual is at end of life, in the context of COVID-19, visitation at end of life refers to the last two weeks of life.
- A suggested consideration when making this determination is, "Would I be surprised if this resident was alive in 2 weeks from now?"

Q. My loved one is a continuing care or licenced supportive living resident but isn't dying/palliative. Am I allowed to visit now if we stay outdoors?

A. Now that the weather is improving, outdoor visits are also acceptable and encouraged, following all physical distancing requirements. All visitors must use a mask or face covering and remain outdoors at all times. Groups must not exceed three, including the resident and the designated essential visitor, and all outdoor visits must be arranged with the operator.



Patient Visitor Restrictions

Q. As a visitor, what do I need to do to keep continuing care or licenced supportive living residents safe from COVID-19?

A. When visiting a continuing care resident, visitors must:

- Undergo a health screening
- Wear requested PPE
- Adhere to physical distancing
- Practice hand washing and good hygiene
- Stay in designated areas
- Follow all facility directions.

Do not visit if you are sick.

Q. Am I allowed to bring gifts when I visit a continuing care or licenced supportive living resident?

A. We think the virus generally only survives for a few hours on a surface or object, but it may be possible for it to survive several days under some conditions. To be safe, please refrain from bringing unessential gifts.



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Q. Are operators able to make further restrictions above the provincial visitor policy?

A. No, not without consulting the appropriate partner (e.g. AHS, Alberta Health, Seniors and Housing, Community and Social Services).

Q. Why are there such variances in the approach that operators are taking with respect to visitors?

A. If several designated essential visitors meet this criteria in any one facility, it is acceptable for an operator to create a reasonable approach that responds to requests in a way that ensures both resident care needs and safe visitor presence (including consideration of operational feasibility and the availability of staff to facilitate the visits, as per requirements) to balance the needs of all. Operators must be transparent about their approach with residents and designated essential visitors.

This may include staggering visits, phasing visitors in on a unit-by-unit basis, or other creative approaches that ensure residents are receiving the essential quality of life and/or care they require in response to unmet needs.

Q. Some facilities schedule 'drive-by parades' and 'visits through the window'. Are these still permitted?

A. In addition to the role of designated essential visitors and the opportunity for outdoor visits, operators, staff, residents and families should continue to work together to find innovative, accessible and feasible solutions to tackle any negative consequences, such as social isolation and loneliness. This may include scheduled visits 'through the window' and 'drive-by parades' as part of social/leisure activity programming, while following all guidelines and requirements for enhanced cleaning protocols and group activities.

Q. What considerations are being explored in regards to PPE and visitation?

A. All outdoor visitors must continuously mask during the visit and follow appropriate physical distancing requirements, as appropriate (e.g. considerations for pushing wheelchair, being hard of hearing). Any type of mask (e.g. nonmedical) should be permitted.

Indoor designated essential visitors must wear a mask continuously throughout their time in the facility and plus any other personal protective equipment (PPE) that might be required depending on the circumstances at the facility.

Q. When and what PPE will be provided to residents and visitors to wear during visits?

A. Outdoor visitors will be permitted to use any type

of mask (e.g. non-medical) while indoor visitors will be provided with a surgical/procedure mask and any other required PPE.

Q. Do continuing care and licensed supportive living facilities have enough PPE to support resident/visitor socialization?

A. We continue to work with all facilities serving vulnerable populations to make sure they have the PPE they need to support the continued safety of staff, residents and visitors.

Q. Why did the Alberta government decide to make these amendments?

A. Alberta seniors have contributed greatly to our province and it's imperative we work to maintain their quality of life. We know residents rely on social connections with friends and family, which is why we're working to support these connections while maintaining safety. It is also important continuing care residents who are nearing the end of life receive the comfort of loved ones.

Q. Given the outbreaks and the number of deaths related to COVID-19 in continuing care facilities, are these amendments to visiting restrictions really a good idea?

A. Maintaining social connections are an important quality of life factor; however, in-person visits should only take place when proper safety measures are followed. Otherwise, continuing care residents and loved ones are encouraged to connect remotely.

Taken from Q & A from Alberta Health regarding CMOH Order 14 and Visitor restrictions, May 4, 2020, Ministry of Community and Social Services



NAAW Contest - Join Today!

The annual National AccessAbility Week (NAAW) is happening between May 31st and June 6th. With the Covid-19 pandemic, VAD has had to cancel the in person events and meetings that were originally planned to celebrate NAAW. To enhance the awareness in the community, VAD is hosting a contest to raise support, awareness and positivity



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in the disability community. Winners will receive a \$1000 awarded to the charity of their choice on their behalf. National AccessAbility Week (NAAW) is a time when accessibility and inclusion are promoted across communities and workplaces, and a time to celebrate the contributions of Canadians with disabilities.

What: Create a video to showcase your celebration of the disability community and the supports that are available within it during the pandemic. Video submissions can be up to 4 minutes in length, content will showcase organizations and people that make the disability community a whole. Pick a topic to theme your video around: Employment, Education, Recreation, Transportation or Housing, and generate some good thoughts to support that sector.

VAD is looking for content where people dance, sing, decorate or dress up to show their community support during the Covid-19 crisis. There are prizes for the best videos with positive messages, with winnings going to the charity of choice by the winning group. VAD is seeking a positive message in video form that will help raise the spirits of everyone in the disability sector. Voting will be done through a social media polling and by number of views per video by the end of NAAW. Register with VAD for the contest and submit your video by May 22, 2020 at 4 pm.

Why: NAAW is coming up and with the soft re-open of the business sector in Alberta, the disability community needs a boost to show the people still working and those returning to work, have the support of the businesses and individuals that make this community a great place. VAD is offering prizes for the best video submissions and will be compiling them into a community video for viewing on YouTube with links from our website. Submissions will be voted on social media and released on social media over the NAAW from May 31 to June 6, 2020.

Who: VAD is looking for volunteers, service providers, government officials, parents, families, self-advocates and anyone that has had to work at home (home schooling included) during the pandemic to submit their video of support. The message your video portrays should be positive and promote the community. You can have a disability, work with a disability, or be someone that supports disabilities; your video will showcase an aspect of your chosen theme and the community.

Where: VAD is looking to see your places of work, your homes and anywhere in between that you have been so-

cial distancing in place to get through the pandemic. Just remember to keep social distancing rules in place.

When: Submit your videos by May 22, 2020 at 4 pm. Voting will be held through social media on May 28/29th and videos will be released throughout the National AccessAbility Week with a compilation video of everyone's submissions made to showcase this great community. Winners will be contacted at the end of NAAW with a donation of \$1000 to the charity of their choice.

How: Videos can be made of any content that shows support for the community. A themed conference call on any social platform (zoom, facetime, etc), a social distance office party, a virtual birthday party, home schooling successes, interviews with front line workers, a slide show of photos to music, decorating your patio or balcony with a message for of support...you decide!



There will be 3 prizes awarded of \$1000 each to the charity of choice by the winning video submission. Videos must have a positive message and be no longer than 4 minutes in length. Video link submissions can be sent to vad@vadsociety.ca. To obtain a copy of the registration from visit our new and events page:

<https://vadsociety.ca/news-and-events>



Education for Life Bursary

To mark the occasion of our 25th anniversary in 1998, Voice of Albertans with Disabilities initiated the Education for Life Bursary program. With this program, we support students who have a disability to achieve their post-secondary goals. Submit a completed application form to VAD by July 15. Information available at:

<https://vadsociety.ca/support/bursaries>



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