

OUR RESPONSE TO THE CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) SPECIAL BULLETIN #44: SEPTEMBER 23, 2021 UPDATE FOR RESIDENTS, FAMILIES & VISITORS

On September 15, 2021, the Government of Alberta declared a state of public health emergency and announced new public health measures to reduce the impacts of COVID-19 in response to Wave 4. COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations continue to rise, largely in unvaccinated Albertans. New measures to protect the health care system, stop the spread, and increase vaccination rates came into effect throughout the province starting September 16 – including access to businesses and services based on vaccination status.

Furthermore, previously on August 31, 2021, Alberta Health Services (AHS) announced they will now require all employees and contracted healthcare providers to be fully immunized for COVID-19, by October 31, 2021. Contracted continuing care providers are included in this AHS governed requirement. This means BSF staff (and contractors) are required to be fully immunized in compliance with this mandatory condition of employment for all healthcare workers.

BSF Safe Visiting Policy Based on Vaccination Status: Resident, Family and Visitor Survey Results

As part of our ongoing commitment to review our COVID-19 Safe Visiting Policy, BSF recently conducted a survey to seek feedback from residents and families on potential changes specifically based on the vaccination status of visitors. A total of 531 responses were received.

An overwhelming majority of **85% of respondents supported a requirement for visitors to show proof of vaccination status or a negative rapid test prior to visiting.** The strong majority of respondents also agreed that visitors without proof of vaccination or a rapid test should be restricted only to Outdoor Visits, Window Visits or Virtual Visits.

COVID-19 Safe Visiting Policy based on Visitor Vaccination Status

As community transmission rises, a growing number of continuing care sites are once again experiencing COVID-19 outbreaks. As a preventative measure for the protection of our residents and everyone living, visiting, and working within our sites, BSF is introducing the following changes to our COVID-19 Safe Visiting Policy.

Effective October 5, 2021, until further notice:

- BSF will require all vaccine eligible visitors to provide proof of full immunization for COVID-19 (14 days past second dose), OR a negative COVID-19 test (within the past 72 hours), to be permitted indoor visitation.
- Visitors that do not have the required proof of full immunization (or choose not to disclose their vaccination status) are not automatically restricted from indoor visitation based on their vaccination status, as they have the choice of a negative Rapid Test instead to continue to access indoor visitation.
- BSF will offer Rapid Testing on site seven days a week, from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. daily. If a visitor requires a Rapid Test to be completed on site, they will be required to visit within these designated Rapid Test hours. If they cannot visit within these hours, they have the option to provide proof of a privately paid negative test completed within the past 72 hours.
- Rapid Tests completed on site by BSF will be valid for entry to the site within 72 hours.
- Visitors that do not have proof of full immunization, and also decline the option of a negative rapid test instead, will not be permitted to visit indoors. Instead, they will have the following alternative visitation options available: Outdoor Visits; Virtual Visits; and Window Visits.
- Exceptions to this policy include:
 - Visitation in end-of-life or exceptional circumstances for compassionate reasons at the discretion and approval of the Site Administrator.
 - Children aged under 12 years who are not yet eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine (see policy for more specific details).

Find out more by viewing the BSF Safe Visiting Policy available at: www.BSF.ca/COVID19.

Zero Tolerance for Non-compliance or Abuse Towards Our People

We appreciate the understanding and cooperation of the majority of our residents, families and visitors. We take this opportunity to remind you that these changes have also been made in consultation with our residents and families who have informed and strongly supported this approach to visitation based on the vaccination status of visitors.

We do understand that everyone's individual risk tolerances vary and that a small minority of our residents, families and visitors will have a differing view on this new restriction. That is why we are still committed to offering a choice (i.e. the option for a rapid test instead), and supporting alternative visitation solutions (i.e. Outdoor and Virtual Visits).

However, please also be reminded that **BSF takes a 'zero tolerance approach' to non-compliance with our COVID-19 Safe Visiting Policy and mandatory Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH) Orders for Continuing Care**, including the mandatory requirements for screening, masking, and any other safety instructions or precautions that may be provided by our staff. **BSF also takes a 'zero tolerance approach' to any abuse of our people** including our frontline screening, reception and nursing teams or any other staff members in any role or position required to ensure adherence to our COVID-19 Safe Visiting Policy or CMOH Orders.

In the unlikely event of heightened conflict, BSF will engage law enforcement to address issues that might arise and, moreover, BSF will seek remedies through the courts to prevent issues from recurring.

Any concerns or complaints with the BSF COVID-19 Safe Visiting Policy should be respectfully and constructively directed to the Site Administrator. Alternatively, you can contact the BSF Quality and Innovation team via the online form available at: www.thebsf.ca/contact/online-feedback.html for your concerns to be addressed by a representative of the BSF Senior Management team.

Reminder: Accessing Immunization Record for Resident Outings

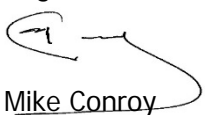
Should a resident choose to participate in an offsite outing, it is the resident's and their family's or visitor's responsibility to understand and follow all mandatory public health measures if applicable in the community. This currently includes restrictions on private social gatherings, masking requirements in indoor public places, and proof of immunization records when accessing businesses and services under Alberta's Restrictions Exemption Program.

If you are accompanying a resident on an outing to a business or service operating under the Restrictions Exemption Program, please ensure you support the resident to access their Government of Alberta issued proof of vaccination card easily available for all vaccinated Albertans online at: www.alberta.ca/CovidRecords.

We are BSF Strong!

Immunization against COVID-19 is the most effective means to prevent the spread of COVID-19, to prevent outbreaks in healthcare and continuing care environments, to preserve workforce capacity to support the healthcare system, and to protect our residents, families, visitors, staff and all others accessing our sites. Evidence confirms that being fully immunized mitigates potential harm to patients and continuing care residents and healthcare workers. Thank you for your ongoing cooperation and understanding.

Together, we remain BSF Strong!



Mike Conroy
President and CEO