

# COVID-19 Isolation Unit Resident and Family Information Sheet

**While our first efforts are on prevention, The Brenda Strafford Foundation also has a comprehensive containment plan to manage an outbreak in the event of the occurrence of COVID-19 within a site. This includes activation of a COVID-19 Isolation Unit. The purpose of this Information Sheet is to help residents and families understand what an Isolation Unit means, why it is the most effective way to provide the best and safest care, and what to expect.**

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## What happens when a resident tests positive for COVID-19?

- In the first case of one resident confirmed to be positive for COVID-19 at a site, that individual will remain cared for in-place, quarantined with full isolation procedures in effect within their suite.
- In the event that two or more residents at a site are confirmed to be positive for COVID-19, from that time all affected residents will be immediately and safely transferred to the Isolation Unit on-site for dedicated care and treatment.

## What is an Isolation Unit?

- An Isolation Unit is a designated area that is dedicated to safely treat a group of residents affected by a highly infectious disease (in this case in an outbreak of COVID-19 at one of our Manors).
- An Isolation Unit may be fitted with advanced engineering controls (for example Negative Pressure ventilation), and includes dedicated medical equipment, trained staff, the required personal protective equipment (PPE), and stringent infection prevention and control (IPC) protocols.

## What are the primary benefits or recommended reasons for an Isolation Unit?

- An Isolation Unit ensures that residents affected by COVID-19 are cared for at the highest standard by a dedicated team that is trained and prepared with access to the required equipment and resources to provide treatment to patients, in the safest and most effective way.
- It is also recommended as a measure to prevent the spread of infectious disease within a location.
- It will ensure that the appropriate PPE and safety precautions are always used by trained staff with exposure to affected residents, while also appropriately conserving the usage of PPE, for the best protection of both residents and staff.
- An Isolation Unit provides extra protection to other residents within a site, by acting to contain the spread and reduce the risk of transmission of the virus in the residential neighbourhoods or common living areas that are still occupied by non-affected residents within the site.

## What belongings can residents take with them?

- In order to maintain the highest standard of infection prevention and control within the Isolation Unit, residents will only be permitted to take the minimum amount of required belongings with them.

## Where is the Isolation Unit located and how will I get there?

- The Isolation Units at each of The Foundation's sites have been established in areas of the building that are segregated from the general resident population, can be easily contained, and have the suitable infrastructure and space needed to accommodate the specific requirements.
- At Bow View Manor, Clifton Manor and Wentworth Manor, the Isolation Units are located within the currently vacant Adult Day Program areas of the site. At Tudor Manor and Cambridge Manor the Isolation Units are located within the Auditoriums.
- Residents will be safely moved from their suite to the Isolation Unit, transported in their bed (for LTC residents with therapeutic/hospital beds), or in a stretcher (applicable to SL residents who have their own beds).
- The beds/stretchers will be covered with a purpose-built tent structure specifically designed to provide the necessary contact and droplet isolation precautions, to ensure infectious droplet particles are not spread to other areas through the building during the transportation process.

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## What does the Isolation Unit look like?

- The Isolation Unit is an open plan, shared space with individual beds set up for residents.
- Physical distancing is maintained between residents with at least 2 meters separation between beds.
- Curtains/dividers have also been installed to provide some privacy between residents.

## What services can residents expect in the Isolation Unit?

- Residents can expect the same care and services they would if they were in isolation within their suite.
- This includes: physician care, nursing care, delivery of meals and snacks, and individual recreation visits.

## What does the Care Plan, Nursing Care and Physician Care look like on the Isolation Unit?

- Treatment for COVID-19-related illnesses will be determined as required by the care team including assessment and consultation by the Registered Nurse and Physician.
- Residents in the Isolation Unit will receive enhanced monitoring by the nursing team (more than would be possible in their regular unit). The dedicated nursing team on an Isolation Unit also have a smaller ratio of residents under their care, so residents receive a higher level of nursing care.
- Monitoring and assessment is provided by a physician. This is most frequently conducted by telephone or video-conference assessments facilitated by the on-site nurse with the physician remotely. A physician will visit the unit in-person in cases when it is considered medically necessary.
- Residents in the Isolation Unit will continue to be treated according to their individual Care Plan. They will continue to receive all medically-necessary treatments and medications as required and appropriate for any existing or chronic illnesses or conditions.

## What is the process for sending residents to hospital from the Isolation Unit?

- Depending on a resident's condition, the resident may be transferred to hospital as per their individual goals of care, and in consultation with the nursing team and physician orders.
- The most common reason that a resident could be transferred to hospital would be for respiratory complications that require the intervention of a ventilator (as ventilators are not available within continuing care and can only be accessed through acute care at hospitals).

## Are residents at greater risk for contracting other infections by being grouped together?

- No – due to the heightened IPC measures in place in the Isolation Unit any residents who are grouped together are not put at greater risk for other infection. In fact, the opposite can be considered true.
- When a resident is tested for COVID-19, the swab also tests for a large panel of airborne respiratory infections. So we know that residents don't have any other contagious respiratory infections.
- The risk of any transmission for any infection within an Isolation Unit is significantly less than on a regular unit, as staff working in the Isolation Unit are using higher levels of PPE and maintain the strictest of IPC protocols to protect themselves and residents from the spread of infection. Isolation Units have dedicated equipment and more stringent cleaning practises so infection is less likely.

## What is Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is worn by staff on the Isolation Unit?

- All staff (or anyone approved to enter/visit the Isolation Unit) is required to wear full PPE.
- This includes: Gown, Mask, Goggles/Face Shield, Gloves.

## What communication can families expect if a resident is in the Isolation Unit?

- Health information and updates will be shared with the designated family/emergency contact (in accordance with privacy standards for information sharing).
- The designated family/emergency contact can expect a once daily status update (at minimum), or as required based on any significant changes to the health status of a resident.

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## Can residents have visitors in the Isolation Unit?

- Visitation will be dependent on the risk assessment for the site and visitation restrictions may apply.
- In accordance with BSF's Safe Visiting Policy, exceptions for visitors can be made in extenuating circumstances, including if a resident is at end-of-life or has a significant change in their health status. These types of compassionate visits will be accommodated in the Isolation Unit, if required, to be approved on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the Administrator.
- Residents on isolation are restricted from having Outdoor Visits. However, Virtual Visits are available in the Isolation Unit, and a dedicated iPad is available for this purpose.

## What palliative care is available within the Isolation Unit?

- In the unfortunate circumstance that a resident's health status declines due to their illness, and they are considered to be at the end-of-life stage, The Foundation's full palliative care services will be provided to ensure dignity and comfort through this transition on the Isolation Unit.
- Families will be granted compassionate visitation in end-of-life cases with residents and will be supported through this transition by The Foundation's palliative care services.

## When will a resident be considered recovered and able to leave the Isolation Unit?

- Residents will be considered recovered from COVID-19 after 14 days and when they are symptom-free, as determined based on assessment by the care team including nursing, the physician and Alberta Health Services (AHS) Medical Officer of Health.
- At that time, recovered residents will be returned to their suite on their regular unit where they will continue to receive enhanced monitoring as a precaution upon recovery.

## Who endorses the use of Isolation Units as best practice in an outbreak?

- Isolation Units are recommended as the best practice for cohorting affected patients when managing outbreaks of infectious diseases by reputable expert organizations including the *World Health Organization* (WHO) and *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention* (CDC).
- Alberta's *Chief Medical Officer of Health* endorses Isolation Units as an effective way to provide care for residents, while keeping other residents safe.
- An Isolation Unit is endorsed by *Alberta Health Services* for effective outbreak management and treatment of cases of COVID-19.
- Isolation Units at The Foundation's sites have been implemented under the recommendation and guidance of The Foundation's Medical Directors.
- The Foundation has also commissioned an independent third-party Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) consultant to inspect and make expert recommendations for the Isolation Units.

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### References:

Alberta Health Services. (2020). *Guidelines for Cohorting Patients with COVID-19*.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2019). *Preparing for COVID-19: Long-term Care Facilities, Nursing Homes*.

World Health Organization. (2020). *Infection Prevention and Control guidance for Long-Term Care Facilities in the context of COVID-19*.