

Personal Care Home Visitation Shelters

The reality of the current COVID-19 situation means there must be a balance between protecting public health, and ensuring meaningful connections continue between residents of Manitoba's personal care homes and their visitors, which support quality of life. That's why the Manitoba government is taking steps to develop a personal care home visiting solution that provides residents and their visitors with protection from the elements, is accessible, can be easily cleaned and provides a space that encourages quality connections.

Engagement Overview

Participants were asked to provide feedback regarding considerations that should be made when designing personal care home visitation shelters and how a visitation space can support quality visits.

In total, 270 people provided feedback through a survey between June 26 to July 15, 2020. Ninety per cent of respondents have family or friends who are residents of a personal care home and 10 per cent work in a personal care home. Of those with friends or family that are residents of a personal care home, more than 50 per cent visit them one to three times a week on average.

If you have family or friends that are residents of a personal care home, before COVID-19, on average how often did you visit them?	
Less than once a week	24%
Once a week	26%
2-3 times a week	28%
4-5 times a week	12%
6-7 times a week	10%
More than 7 times a week	1%

What We Heard

Participants provided input on three topics summarized below.

1. Health and Safety Measures

The majority of participants indicated they are somewhat or very comfortable with the following health and safety measures for personal care home visitation shelters.

The health and safety of personal care home residents, visitors and care providers is paramount as we move forward making plans for personal care home visitation shelters. How comfortable do the following measures make you?					
	Very comfortable	Somewhat comfortable	Somewhat uncomfortable	Very uncomfortable	Not sure
Requiring visitors to wear a non-medical mask or face covering.	60%	23%	8%	9%	1%
Requiring visitors to use hand sanitizer.	90%	7%	2%	1%	0%
Using physical distancing protocols during visitation.	41%	25%	16%	17%	1%
Using enhanced cleaning protocols in the visitation shelters.	79%	11%	4%	3%	3%
Remote video monitoring of the space.	34%	25%	16%	20%	5%
Using online tools for visitation appointments and reminders.	67%	19%	4%	7%	3%
Having a dedicated entry for residents and staff separate from visitors.	68%	16%	4%	7%	6%

2. Considerations When Designing Personal Care Home Visitation Shelters

Participants highlighted seven themes related to the design of personal care home shelters. Feedback from participants included items related to accessibility, comfort, ambiance, health and wellness, safety and sustainability.

Accessibility

Many participants indicated that design of the shelter should be accessible to all residents and consider the needs of people with physical, cognitive or mobility disabilities. Accessible design considerations mentioned by participants include:

- getting residents to and from the shelter, especially in poor weather
- ensuring year round access for residents and visitors
- ensuring the shelter is wheelchair accessible
- ensuring ease of access to the shelter including mobility aids such as handrails and ramps
- considering the needs of people with a hearing disability and design for good acoustics and noise control

Amenities

Many participants commented that the space should include amenities that would make the shelter comfortable and enable interaction and activities. Amenities noted by participants include:

- washrooms for visitors
- technology-based amenities that enable activities such as listening to music, watching television and sharing family photos and videos such as Wi-Fi, smart TV, computer access and power outlets
- comfortable seating that allows people to play games, read books or share a meal

Atmosphere

One of the most common suggestions from participants was the need for shelters to be a welcoming, cozy space for all to enjoy. It was noted that residents should feel like they are at home during these visits and not displaced from their own personal space.

Considerations highlighted by participants include:

- sound barriers and other considerations to ensure privacy during visits
- décor that is warm and cheerful
- windows that provide good lighting with blinds to shade from direct sun
- a climate-controlled space with the ability to adjust the temperature according to comfort

Infection Prevention

The importance of a space designed to prevent infection was identified by several participants. Key components of infection prevention in a shelter as mentioned by participants include:

- using technology for disinfection, visitor screening and air sanitation
- designing a space with easy to clean surfaces, including furniture
- designing spaces with Plexiglas barriers for protection and as an alternative to wearing masks
- creating a separate area for screening visitors
- including amenities such as hand hygiene sinks

Layout

A key message from participants is the importance of a shelter layout that has adequate space to accommodate the needs of the residents and allow for quality visits. Participants commented that the layout should provide the option for:

- separate visitation areas that allow for multiple groups visiting at the same time
- space for multiple visitors per resident without feeling cramped
- space for larger family visits for special occasions
- sufficient space for hospital beds and medical equipment if needed

Safety

Participants mentioned the importance of minimizing safety risks associated with personal care home visitation shelters. Design elements highlighted by participants include:

- patient call bell systems in event of emergency, or if help is required
- staff need to be able to monitor visits in shelters without compromising privacy

Sustainability

The importance of designing a sustainable shelter was identified by participants. Participants mentioned that the design should:

- reduce negative impacts on the environment by using environmentally friendly materials
- be built to withstand Manitoba weather
- be able to be used for other purposes

The table below provides a breakdown of the number of mentions for each key theme identified by participants when providing feedback on the design of personal care home visitation shelters.

Theme	Number of mentions
Atmosphere	94
Accessibility	70
Amenities	46
Layout	28
Infection Prevention	27
Safety	12
Sustainability	5

3. Supporting Quality Visits

Participants placed a clear emphasis that the well-being of residents within personal care homes should be the focus when determining how a space can support quality visits. Several participants noted the mental health of their loved ones has suffered dramatically since COVID-19. There needs to be a balance between protecting residents from infection and supporting their overall health.

Participants identified barriers that need to be addressed in order to support quality visits and maintain quality of life of residents as described below.

Visitation Schedules

Several participants commented that family and friends need more access to visit with residents. Both the length and frequency of visits need to increase as well as more flexibility in the timing of visits and an improved process to book visits.

One of the biggest barriers identified preventing an increase in the frequency of visits is a shortage of staff to support all aspects of visitation such as transporting staff, cleaning and disinfecting, and ensuring that health and safety protocols are being upheld.

Numerous comments suggest hiring more staff to support visits and using volunteers to fill some of these roles.

Policies and Procedures

Many participants commented that not only do visits need to happen more often and for longer amounts of time; they need to be structured in a way that is conducive to spending quality time with residents. Participants noted several policies and procedures put in place due to COVID-19 should be reviewed and addressed to allow for quality visits while maintaining effective infection prevention, including:

- enhancing screening and sanitation protocols to allow for physical contact such as hugging
- reviewing the number of visitors allowed at one time so entire families can visit a resident at the same time
- encouraging meaningful interaction and activities with residents such as sharing coffee/tea, playing games or looking at photo albums
- allowing for regular visits with spiritual care providers and pastors
- being able to help with the care of residents including assisting at a meal, cleaning their rooms and other tasks often supported by family and friends prior to COVID-19
- bringing in outside items that provide comfort and care for residents such as homemade food

Next Steps

The Manitoba government is now taking steps to develop an outside of personal care home visiting solution that provides residents and their visitors with protection from the elements, is accessible, can be easily cleaned and provides a space that encourages quality connections.

For more information on COVID-19 in Manitoba, including the most recent changes to the #RestartMB Pandemic Response System, visit www.manitoba.ca/covid19.