

MEMO

Date: December 24, 2020
To: Service Delivery Organizations – Leadership, Directors, Front-Line Managers
From: Lanette Siragusa, Chief Nursing Officer, Shared Health
Re: **COVID 19 – Compassionate Virtual Communication with Patient Families/Loved Ones**

Visitor restrictions during COVID-19 are intended to balance necessary preventative measures with the importance of maintaining connections between patients and their loved ones.

The absence of in-person visits is understandably challenging and frightening for both patients and their families. While essential care partners may be permitted to visit, access remains limited and all other visitors and family members who would normally be regular visitors at the bedside are not permitted.

Families and loved ones are therefore relying on health care teams for updated information on their loved one's condition, prognosis and even to say their goodbyes. Tools on clear and consistent communication with families, including tips for compassionate phone conversations, are available by referring to [this guide on talking to relatives](#).

Other tips include:

- Consider designating one or two staff members that will provide regular updates to the patient's family. Depending on the patient's individual circumstances and care needs, information may include:
 - Daily updates (How did the patient sleep? Did the patient eat breakfast? Is the patient awake?);
 - Changes in patient's clinical status;
 - Reminders about the use of virtual visits;
 - Notice of transfers to another unit or facility, and repatriation.