

*A Quick Guide to Transitioning a Family Member into a LTC Home
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Welcome to the ‘family’ of the Niagara Long Term Care Residences.

The Family Council has created this short guide, for families, as they transition their loved ones into long term care. We know that this was a multi-faceted, but necessary, decision and it is our hope that we can help you navigate some of the changes that this transition will bring. We know that this can be a trying and challenging time for family members. We’ve all been through those difficult first few days, weeks and months. We understand the emotions surrounding bringing your loved one to their new home. We know that there is a large degree of uncertainty with the changes that both you and your loved one will be experiencing. With this guide we hope that we can offer you some understanding, some guidance, some coping strategies as well as providing some answers to the most frequently asked questions. We believe that this guide will help you feel confident that they are indeed in the right place and that you have made the best decision for them, and their care.

Let’s start by reassuring you that we understand that your role as primary caregiver has changed. You now have a team of caregivers looking after your loved one, throughout the day. You are, in reality, your loved ones co-caregiver now. The compassionate, caring and highly trained staff at the home believe that their first priority is to help welcome your loved one into their new environment. Their immediate focus will be to help them transition into their new life at the NLTC-R. And while change is never easy we hope that there will come a time, over the next few weeks, when you feel that you can perhaps relax a bit now that you know your loved one is receiving excellent care every hour of every day. Having said that, you do have a new primary role in your loved ones life. That of staff relations. Over the next while we urge you to get to know your loved ones caregivers. And know that they want to get to know you, as well. You are an important link into their understanding of your loved one. Getting to know you will help them know your loved one. Many relationships will be forged during the first few weeks and months at the NLTC-R and all will benefit your loved one.

Here are answers to some of the common questions family ask..

Q. How do I check on how my loved one is doing, on a daily basis?

A. The best advice we can give you is to call the home whenever you feel anxious about your loved one and their care. The receptionist will direct you to the nurses station, on your loved ones floor, if you let them know their room number. If you cannot reach the staff on that floor, chances are they are away from their desk assisting the residents. If you choose, you can access the nurses station voicemail or simply call back a little later, but do reach out whenever you feel the need arise.

Q. When can I start visiting my loved one?

A. We recognize that every resident transitions differently but we’ve found that letting them settle in for the first few days is helpful in getting them orientated to their new home and their new routines. In the meantime, consider talking to the Executive Director about becoming an ECG (Essential Caregiver) for your loved one. To understand this fully please see the manual that you would have received in your welcome package.

Q. How long should I visit, in the beginning?

A. Your loved one may be overwhelmed by the changes that they are adapting to, so we recommend that your visits be kept to around thirty minutes for the first little while. This will allow them the time and space they need (and you as well) to get used to their new routines.

Q. Are there activities in the home?

A. There are a variety of activities offered daily in our home. The variety of programs range from: social, emotional, physical, spiritual etc. The programs we offer can be one on one support and/or group activities and are open to all residents. At some point you may want to speak with the Activities Program Manager (extension 215) and let them know what your loved ones social life was like before entering the home. That way the activities staff will get a sense of which activities your loved one may enjoy. There is no need to sign your loved one up for activities or programs. The recreation staff will gather those interested in plenty of time for the activities. At the beginning of each month an activities calendar is posted in residents room and at various locations through the home (such as the information cork boards near the elevators) so that everyone knows ahead of time what's happening that day. You'll notice that many days there are five or more activities planned throughout the day, so many residents are quite active.

Q. Are there church services?

A. We offer weekly church services on Mondays - our pastor has alternative contacts for other spiritualities and can connect your loved ones with spiritual support if they are not able to.

Q. Do you have a tuck shop or vending machines on the premises, for the occasional treat?

A. We do have vending machines by the first floor elevators. A traveling tuck shop also comes around each floor on Wednesday afternoons. Residents will need to have a 'trust account' set up for purchases. Please see the extended manual for more information on a trust account.

Q. I've purchased some new clothing for my loved one. What is the procedure for new items coming into the home?

A. Any new clothing articles or items that you are bringing in after their admissions day need to be laundered and labeled by the home. The front desk staff can help you with this. There is a form that must be filled out (available at the front desk) and placed, along with the item(s), in a specialized garment bag. This will then be sent down to the laundry department, by the staff.

Q. I'm concerned about my loved ones dietary needs (likes/dislikes of certain foods etc.). Who do I speak to about that?

A. You can have a conversation with the homes Food Services Department (extension 212). They would welcome your input into your loved ones dietary needs and wants.

Q. I am worried about security. Do you have protocols in place to monitor my loved ones comings and goings?

A. Your loved one is absolutely safe here. Under the Resident's Bill of Rights, every Resident has the right to live in a safe and clean environment. Security cameras have been placed throughout the inside and outside of the home and are monitored 24 hours a day, in order to keep residents safe. The manual has an in-depth section on this.

We hope that we have answered some of the questions that may be important to you, as a family member. The Family Council is here to help you however we can. Feel free to reach out to us if you feel you need further information, support or simply to share feedback with us. Whatever your concerns, we have been there too. Becoming involved in the homes' Family Council is another way to help your loved one, in their new home. We would welcome your involvement, at any level.

In closing, we are including a short list of resources that we found helpful and informative, with regards to navigating the changes around life with a family member in long term care. Remember to take time to read the manual included in your welcome packet that you were given on your loved ones admission day. It is also a valuable resource.

In helping with the transition of a loved one into LTC the Dementia Society of Ottawa and Renfrew has produced some very helpful webinars and YouTube videos, as well as general information, on their website (www.dementiahelp.ca). We strongly urge you to take advantage of their knowledge by checking the website out. We have found it invaluable.

The following is a list of some of the resources we've found helpful, (for information and support for family members) in coping with the many questions you may have regarding your loved ones dementia and the changes that brings. There are also additional resources that may be helpful in addressing some issues that may arise in your loved ones long term care home.

1. The Alzheimer's Society - essential information (www.alzheimers.ca)
2. The Alzheimer's Society of Niagara - information & support (www.alzheimers.ca/Niagara)
3. Now What? Managing the Emotional Journey of Long Term Care for Families...a very helpful book by Deborah Bakti
4. Family Councils Ontario - resources and webinars for families (www.fco.ngo)
5. Brainxchange - a network for support and education (www.brainxchange.ca)
6. RIA - Research Institute for Aging (www.the-ria.ca)
7. The PoET project - Prevention of Error-based Transfers - an invaluable website that offers short monthly webinars on such issues as capacity, consent, residents wishes, POA's etc. (www.poetproject.ca).
8. The Indispensable Survival Guide to Ontario's Long-Term Care System by Karen Cumming and Patricia Milne (even though this is the last book on the resource list I found it to be one of the most valuable resources ...and it's available on Amazon.ca).