

Safe Handling of Deceased Patient's Personal Property During COVID-19 Continuing Care FAQs

Frequently Asked Questions

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Does the *Safe Handling of Deceased Patient's Personal Property During COVID-19 Directive* apply to Home Care?

This document applies to AHS facilities which, as defined in the directive, includes all congregate living sites in the community. Both continuing care sites (e.g. personal care homes, lodge, Designated Supportive Living, Long-Term Care) and mental health sites (e.g. group homes and/or facilities) fall under this applicability. It does not apply when a client lives in a private residence such as their own home or with family, however the principles for cleaning and discarding of items would still apply.

Safe Handling of Deceased Patient's Personal Belongings After Death During COVID-19 Directive:

<https://insite.albertahealthservices.ca/Main/assets/Policy/clp-ahs-safe-handling-personal-property-hcs-257.pdf#search=deceased%20patient>

How long does COVID-19 live on non-organic surfaces?

While surface transmission isn't the most common form of spreading the virus, it is a possibility. Since COVID-19 can remain viable and infectious on surfaces for an undetermined amount of time, current advisement is to follow contact and droplet precautions while disinfecting all surfaces and/or objects in an area or room where a person who was COVID-19 positive resided.

How do we disinfect and/or bag furniture for removal?

Programs may not be able to disinfect or bag furniture due to the nature of the material (e.g. wood that cannot be bleached) or the size of the piece (e.g. chairs or couches). Follow program processes for removal of furniture during pandemic or outbreak management including routine practices and/or use of PPE for contact/droplet precautions for those moving furniture.

What type of bags should we use?

There are no specific requirements for the type of plastic bag, however families may prefer see-through plastic so they can roughly confirm contents by sight and so that the cleanliness of the bag is more apparent. Ensure the name of the resident is clearly visible on the outside of the bag to eliminate the need for opening. If the bag becomes punctured, put the unopened bag of belongings into another bag without opening the layers.

We have been told that our site should only allow essential visitors. Are movers or additional family members allowed on-site to remove client belongings?

At this time, a maximum of two (2) movers and/or family members are allowed on-site to remove client belongings and should wear appropriate PPE including following routine practices while moving belongings. See section on guidance for arranging moves and transfers:

<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/info/ppih/if-ppih-covid-19-cc-client-screening-questionnaire.pdf>

Where should we put belongings when the family is unable to claim them?

During the Covid-19 pandemic, programs should consider dedicating a secure space to store client belongings. Some sites have used storage rooms in the facility while others have rented outdoor storage rooms. If using facility laundry services, advise family that return of clean clothing may take longer. Double-bag all items regardless of whether or not they are laundered.

How do programs recover accommodation costs when belongings are unable to be removed from the room due to extenuating circumstances?

Programs should cover costs and submit records for reimbursement as part of their COVID-19-related expenses. The family should not be charged for the accommodation fee in extenuating circumstances (e.g. facility is unable to accommodate the move-out or the family is on quarantine in accordance with CMOH orders).

What should I use if I don't have a safekeeping envelope for valuables?

Use a regular envelope and attach a record such as the Deceased Personal Property Form to the outside. Contracted programs should use their own forms and/or processes. For AHS and AHS-affiliate see:

<https://insite.albertahealthservices.ca/main/assets/tms/cad/tms-cad-19582-personal-property.pdf>

Should we release belongings only to the Alternate-Decision Maker (ADM) or to whichever family is present or available?

Programs should contact the ADM to determine a plan for releasing personal belongings. If the program is having difficulty contacting the ADM, consider moving personal belongings to a storage area in the interim.

What should we do with the belongings if there is no ADM or family member to claim them?

Programs should follow their current processes for managing belongings when an ADM or family member is not available to claim them. Advisements may be provided through policy, procedure or a process map. Below is an example of a process map for unclaimed personal property:

<https://insite.albertahealthservices.ca/Main/assets/tms/cad/tms-cad-personal-property.pdf#search=deceased%20patient%20unclaimed>

Should the family member also verify the client's belongings?

Yes. The family member should sign a release form such as the Release of Deceased Patient Personal Property & Valuables Form. Contracted programs should use their own forms and/or processes. For AHS and AHS-affiliate see:

<https://insite.albertahealthservices.ca/main/assets/tms/cad/tms-cad-19724-release-of-personal-property-valuables.pdf>

Will our program be reimbursed for the additional costs associated with managing belongings after death?

Programs should cover costs and submit records for reimbursement as part of their COVID-19 related expenses.

Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) doesn't usually recommend double-bagging but it's a requirement of the *Safe Handling of Deceased Patient's Personal Property During COVID-19 Directive*. Why?

AHS IPC is aligning with direction provided by Environmental Public Health and the World Health Organization in recommending double-bagging of personal property. See: https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/331499/WHO-2019-nCoV-IPC_WASH-2020.2-eng.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

Resources:

COVID-19 Public Health Recommendations for Handling of Deceased Persons:
<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/info/ppih/if-ppih-covid-19-handling-of-deceased.pdf>

COVID-19 Safe Handling of Personal Property Post Death Family Instructions:
<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/info/ppih/if-ppih-covid-19-safe-handling-of-personal-property-post-death-family-instructions.pdf>

Interim IPC Recommendations COVID-19:
<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/healthinfo/ipc/hi-ipc-emerging-issues-ncov.pdf>

Laundry Information for Families:
<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/healthinfo/ipc/hi-ipc-covid-cont-care-tips-pers-clean-laund-z0-letter.docx>