Complying with the Visitor Access Code: Technology to support Aged Care Homes.

In response to the heightened risk introduced to residents of Aged Care Homes due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a new Industry Code for Visiting Residential Aged Care Homes (the "Code") has been adopted by the Australian Federal Government, with consultation and support from the Aged Care sector. The Code provides a range of policies for aged care homes to adhere to with the objective to enable residents at a home to receive visitors, while minimising the risk of the introduction of COVID-19 to the site.

Aged care industry bodies, government and community members agree that social connections and support are vital to the health and wellbeing of residents in aged care homes. Human rights recognise that all people living in an aged care home have the right to freedom of movement and association, including the right for residents to see their families. Under the Code, facilitating new and innovative practices that permit visitors to connect with residents, while minimising risk of virus transmission, must be a high priority. Choosing to block all visitors access to residents in the name of health and safety, without demonstrating an actionable plan to enable visitors, is in contravention of the Code.

However, many facilities are in the position where they are not equipped with the right systems to be able to permit visitors onto their premises while complying with the Code, ultimately resulting in visitors continuing to be denied entry. In order for the Code to be properly adopted, to safely enable visitors' access to aged care homes, operational systems are required that are time and cost effective in supporting aged care staff to ensure homes meet the policy requirements.

LoopLearn technology is designed to meet the requirements of aged care homes and introduce a new high standard of effective hygiene and people-on-premise management. Key principles of the Code are listed below, with an analysis of how the LoopLearn system enables aged care homes to excel in fulfilling these principles to deliver an outstanding level of care with a simple to use, cost effective and time effective solution:

a) Respond to screening questions

- While the Code only refers to this policy in relation to visitors, LoopLearn enables this to be built into the sign in process for all types of visitors as well as contractors, staff or residents. A historical digital log is kept of all answers to screening questions when a person signs into the premises – or when a staff member clocks on for work. In the event a person fails a screening question, immediate notifications are automatically provided to the person who submitted the answer and to designated staff members, enabling risk mitigation processes to be efficiently communicated and followed. Once configured, the screening questions don't require any staff oversite for visitors who are signing in, as they will be automatically notified if an issue occurs.

b) Demonstrate an up-to-date flu vaccination

- The Code specifically highlights evidence of a flu vaccination as a type of required document to be provided by a visitor to gain entry to an aged care home. LoopLearn understands that there are other examples of required documents for different types of guests – especially contractors – that aged care facilities are obliged to retain as part of their duty of care. Required Documents can be saved to visitor profiles in the LoopLearn system. If a staff member has not marked a Required Document, for example "2020 Flu Vaccination", as valid for a particular visitor, that visitor will be notified of this missing requirement if they try to sign into the home. Likewise, if a staff member attempts to book a future scheduled visit for that visitor in the LooopLearn visitor schedule, the staff member will be notified of the missing requirement and can follow due processes to ensure the visitor complies prior to coming on site.
  This process supports staff members to know that all requirements, such as 2020 Flu

Vaccinations, have been obtained by visitors, without needing to manually check for each requirement every time a visitor wishes to schedule a visit or comes on site.

c) *Mandatory hand hygiene*

- LoopLearn's sign in management technology, the LoopKiosk, operates LoopLearn's proprietary facial recognition technology. This hands-free identification process reduces the need for touching of shared equipment, assisting in mitigating the risk of transmitting disease.
  Effectively communicating processes and practices for hand hygiene is critical to ensure all individuals comply. Aged care homes can utilise the LoopKiosk as a customisable display noticeboard, to share educational/informative messages on hand hygiene. They also have the option to build hand hygiene information into the sign in process, where a screen in the sign in workflow will display information for the visitor to acknowledge they have read and understood.
  As a final communication tool, an automated email can be sent to the visitors provided email address at completion of sign in. This email can include information on facility hygiene practices and visitor compliance.

d) *Temperature check on arrival*

- The LoopKiosk+ product offering comes with an in-built medical grade temperature sensor, unlike a thermal imaging camera, this sensor is accurate to +/- 0.1degC. This will automatically log the temperature of each individual who signs in or employee who clocks on. This process automates the temperature checking of each person as they sign in or employees as they clock on for work, without requiring additional staff resource to manually take a temperature reading or adding additional system checks for people coming on site.
  In the event that a high-risk body temperature is detected, the individual will receive an immediate automated notification with information on steps to take to comply with the aged care home's procedures. At the same time, an automated notification will be delivered to designated staff members to alert them of the high-risk sign in attempt and provide any relevant information to assist them to address the risk efficiently, safely, and to mitigate any risk of confusion by supplying immediate information on the homes procedures.

e) *Facilities may choose to limit total number of visitors on site to reduce infection transmission risk*

- The LoopLearn system provides a Visitor Schedule functionality, where authorised staff members can book in scheduled visitors to a particular date and time, assign their host (employee or resident), location (if relevant), and expected departure time.
  This scheduler is designed to support aged care homes to manage the total expected number of people on site at any given time, as well as to automatically comply to any limits on residents to receive visitors. For example, a home may invoke a policy that residents can receive a maximum of one visitor per day, or some residents may be high risk and have a temporary restriction on receiving visitors.
  Administrators at an aged care facility can configure these limit settings and change them as required. These limits, if reached, will automatically notify a staff member creating a scheduled booking if the booking exceeds the set limits, and if a guest arrives on site without a scheduled booking and attempts to sign in via the LoopKiosk.

f) *Limiting duration of visits*

- Each visit in the LoopLearn system can be created with a scheduled departure time. To support staff and visitors to comply with the visitor time limits, when a departure time is reached for a particular visitor and they have not yet signed out of the facility, automated notifications will be sent to the visitor and to designated staff members.

The LoopLearn system is designed to automate requirement checks and provide communications to ensure that aged care homes can provide the best care possible to their residents and community members. The digitisation of these processes removes the time intensive manual processes from staff members, enabling them to spend more time on high impact work providing care to residents, and ultimately mitigating risks introduced by human error.

In many respects, complying with the previously mentioned policies manually would not be feasible for many homes due to the extensive requirement of human resource hours and associated costs. They will need to look to digital technology solutions to support them in running their homes.

LoopLearn provides a comprehensive solution with a focus on innovating in partnership with the aged care sector, to ensure a new high standard of care both in prevention of disease transmission, and enabling vital social connections.

Reference: https://www.cota.org.au/policy/aged-care-reform/agedcarevisitors/

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