

Ministry of Long-Term Care

Office of the Associate Deputy
Minister, Long-Term Care Policy
and Pandemic Response

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February 3, 2022

MEMORANDUM TO: Long-Term Care Home Licensees

FROM: Erin Hannah
Associate Deputy Minister
LTC Policy and Pandemic Response

SUBJECT: LTC Pandemic Response Updates

The Omicron variant is the latest challenge that residents and their families, and the staff who work each day in residents' homes have faced during the COVID-19 pandemic, and it is having a profound impact on the lives of residents as we collectively combat the virus and minimize the risk of serious illness.

Today we are pleased to share with you the plan to start easing the temporary enhanced measures that were put in place in December in the face of the Omicron wave.

On December 28, 2021, based on public health advice, the Ministry introduced additional temporary enhanced measures for LTC homes, specifically pausing general visitors and social day absences (initial measures were put in place earlier in December including keeping the number of caregivers visiting a resident at one time to a maximum of two). This was not an easy decision and it was noted that we anticipated that these additional measures would be required for at least 6 to 8 weeks.

Based on encouraging public health and health care indicators overall, the Ministry has worked with the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health (OCMOH) to plan for the gradual easing of temporary enhanced measures currently in place to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission and serious illness in long-term care homes. This plan is in the context of the broader reopening Ontario approach announced by the province in January and is also contingent on the absence of concerning trends in public health and health care indicators over the coming weeks. It is within this context of a cautious and phased approach that we are:

On February 7, 2022:

- Increasing the maximum number of designated caregivers per resident from 2 to 4 (unless designated before December 15th). Continue with limit of 2 visitors (currently only caregivers) at a time per resident.
- Resuming social day absences for residents who have had at least three COVID-19 vaccine doses, while supporting these residents with information about the benefits of limiting contact with others, including avoiding large social gatherings, following masking and physical distancing as much as possible, and only being in close contact with people who have had three COVID-19 vaccine doses.

Targeting February 21, 2022 to:

- Resume all general visitors 5 years and older who have had at least two COVID-19 vaccine doses.
 - Children under 5 years of age would continue to be restricted from entering a long-term care home, except for infants 12 months or younger.
- Increase limits on the number of visitors (including caregivers) that may visit a resident at one time to 3.
- Expand social day absences to all residents regardless of vaccination status.
- Resume social overnight absences for residents who have had at least three COVID-19 vaccine doses.

With the resumption of general visitors into the homes, this will also allow for the resumption of adult day programs, entertainers and personal care services (where the person is not a staff member) in the homes. Social group activities should remain as small groups (i.e., up to 10).

Targeting March 14, 2022 to:

- Resume visits by general visitors under 5 years old. No vaccination requirement for those under the age of 5.
- Increase limit on the number of visitors (including caregivers) at a time per resident to 4.
- Allow social overnight absences for all residents regardless of vaccination status.

Please note, surveillance testing requirements per the most recent testing directive dated December 17, 2021 for all staff, caregivers and visitors continue to be in place.

The updated MLTC Guidance Document to reflect the changes effective on Monday, February 7th will be shared tomorrow.

Changes to Ministry of Health Guidance

The Ministry has been working closely with the OCMOH on updates to the Ministry of Health's COVID-19 Guidance: Long-term care Homes and Retirement Homes for public health units. Revised guidance was released to public health units today and includes updates to the confirmed outbreak definition, management of contacts (i.e., definitions for high-risk and lower-risk contacts), cohorting during outbreaks, and protocols for admissions and transfers (see attached). Some updates include:

- guidance regarding continuing activities for non-impacted residents while one section of a home is in outbreak;
- activities for those in isolation;
- reduction in the amount of time that residents who are close contacts are required to be in isolation; and
- clarity to the definition of outbreak as it relates to staff cases.

These changes are aimed at balancing the risk of COVID-19 infection and transmission with overall resident health and wellbeing. You and your teams will be invited to a webinar to support a full and consistent understanding of these changes across long-term care homes, retirement homes, public health units and hospitals.

We recognize that the information flow has been intensified over the past several weeks and changes needed to be implemented rapidly. The continued commitment of you and your teams to reducing COVID-19-related risks within long-term care homes while balancing overall resident health and wellbeing is critical and greatly appreciated.

As always, should you have questions you may contact us at MLTCPandemicResponse@ontario.ca.

Sincerely,

Original signed by

Erin Hannah
Associate Deputy Minister

Attachment: MOH COVID-19 Guidance: Long-term care Homes and Retirement Homes for public health units

c: Nancy Matthews, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Long-Term Care (MLTC)
Dr. Catherine Zahn, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Health (MOH)
Dr. Kieran Moore, Chief Medical Officer of Health
Dr. Barbara Yaffe, Associate Chief Medical Officer of Health
Alison Blair, Associate Deputy Minister, Pandemic Response and Recovery Division, Ministry of Health (MOH)

Michael Hillmer, Assistant Deputy Minister, Capacity Planning and Analytics
Division, MOH/MLTC
Lisa Levin, Chief Executive Officer, AdvantAge Ontario
Donna Duncan, Chief Executive Officer, Ontario Long Term Care Association
Monika Turner, Association of Municipalities of Ontario
Michael Jacek, Association of Municipalities of Ontario
Colleen Geiger, President and CEO (Acting), Public Health Ontario
Jeff Butler, Assistant Deputy Minister, LTC Operations Division, MLTC
Matthew Anderson, President and CEO, Ontario Health
Cynthia Martineau, CEO, Home and Community Care Support Services