

Ministry of Long-Term Care

Office of the Associate Deputy
Long-Term Care Pandemic
Response

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February 16, 2021

MEMORANDUM TO: Long-Term Care Home Licensees

FROM: Erin Hannah
Associate Deputy Minister
Ministry of Long-Term Care

SUBJECT: **Updates – Rapid Antigen Testing, COVID-19 Response Framework and Vaccination Program**

Today marks the day that homes in Toronto Public Health, York Region Public Health Services, Peel Public Health, Windsor-Essex County Public Health Unit, Ottawa Public Health, Durham Region Health Department and Simcoe-Muskoka District Health Unit begin offering Antigen Tests for caregivers, support works and general visitors. We are thrilled to report that as of Friday February 12th Ontario Health has shipped more than 1 million Panbio™ COVID19 test kits to 507 homes. This is fantastic progress in implementing rapid antigen testing in LTC homes.

Following additional thoughtful feedback from stakeholders, including family councils and individual caregivers, we are updating the testing frequency requirements for caregivers. Previously, caregivers were to be tested on the “day of” regardless of how many times they visited a home in a 7-day period. As of today, caregivers will be tested at the same frequency as staff, student placements and volunteers. That is, caregivers who enter LTC homes two or more days in a 7-day period will undergo Antigen Tests on non-consecutive days up to 3 times in that period. If a caregiver visits only once or twice in 7-day period they will be tested on the “day of”, regardless of whether the two days are consecutive days.

We would also like to note that homes must ensure that COVID-19 point-of-care antigen tests are used only for the purposes of the Rapid Antigen Test Screening Program and not resold or distributed to any other person.

Last week the government announced that the Province will gradually transition each public health unit (PHU) region out of the current shutdown measures to zone assignments under a revised and strengthened [*COVID-19 Response Framework: Keeping Ontario Safe and Open*](#) (the “Framework”).

For LTC homes, this means reviewing and following the restrictions and requirements that help to protect residents and staff from COVID-19 that are relevant to the zone your PHU region is assigned to. We have included a reference tool that outlines the LTC-specific restrictions and requirements within the Framework zones, which in most cases do not vary across the zones. These are in addition to the public health measures and infection prevention and control practices that homes also need to be following and reinforcing at every opportunity.

Finally, we are also attaching the most recent letter that was sent to PHUs and hospitals regarding the vaccination program which reinforces the priority of reaching all staff and caregivers in LTC homes who want to receive a vaccine, as well as any remaining residents. It is critical that homes continue to work closely with your PHU to ensure readiness and we urge you to continue to take steps to increase vaccine confidence among staff and caregivers with the goal of achieving the greatest uptake possible.

Sincerely,

Original signed by

Erin Hannah

Attachments:

1. *COVID-19 Framework Zone Requirements for LTC Homes*
2. *Memo: Sequencing of Phase One Priority Populations for Vaccination with Vaccine Supply Resumption*
3. *COVID-19: Guidance for Prioritizing Health Care Workers for COVID-19 Vaccination*
4. *Minister's Directive: COVID-19: LONG-TERM CARE HOME SURVEILLANCE TESTING AND ACCESS TO HOMES*
5. *Updated FAQ's Enhancing Protection for Long-Term Care Homes*

c: Richard Steele, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Long-Term Care (MLTC)
Sheila Bristo, Assistant Deputy Minister, Long-Term Care Operations Division, MLTC
Dr. David Williams, 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
Renee Mahalanobis, Director, Long-Term Care Projects and Stabilization, MLTC