

Ministry of Long-Term Care

Office of the Deputy Minister
400 University Ave, 6th Fl
Toronto ON M5G 1S5
Telephone: (416) 325-6200

Ministère des Soins de longue durée

Bureau du sous-ministre
400, av University, 6e étage
Toronto ON M5G 1S5
Téléphone: (416) 325-6200



November 19, 2020

MEMORANDUM TO: Long-Term Care Home Licensees

FROM: Richard Steele
Deputy Minister
Ministry of Long-Term Care

SUBJECT: **Updated Long-Term Care Sector Surveillance Testing Strategy**

As you may be aware, the Ontario government recently released the [COVID-19 Response Framework: Keeping Ontario Safe and Open](#). The new framework categorizes public health regions into five levels: Green-Prevent, Yellow-Protect, Orange-Restrict, Red-Control, and Lockdown being a measure of last and urgent resort.

The Ministry of Long-Term Care (Ministry) continues to monitor the status of COVID-19 outbreaks across long-term care homes in the provinces. Protecting residents, staff and visitors from the risk of COVID-19 remains our top priority.

Today, the Ministry is updating guidance on surveillance testing in the long-term care home sector and will provide further direction on testing over the coming days to support long-term care homes to enhance efficiency and convenience for staff and homes.

Staff and Volunteer Testing

- With respect to testing of long-term care home staff and volunteers, effective Monday, November 23, 2020:
 - Every two weeks testing of staff should continue to be implemented for homes located in public health unit regions in the Green-Prevent and Yellow-Protect levels.

- Every two weeks testing of volunteers should be implemented for homes located in public health unit regions in the Green-Prevent and Yellow-Protect levels.
- Weekly testing of staff and volunteers should be implemented for homes located in public health unit regions in the Orange-Restrict, Red-Control or Lockdown levels.
- This applies to staff and volunteers as defined in the *Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007*.

Visitor Testing

- With respect to visitors to long-term care homes located in public health unit regions in the Orange-Restrict, Red-Control or Lockdown levels, effective Monday, November 23, 2020:
 - Homes should ensure that **caregivers** provide proof of a negative COVID-19 test result in the past week and verbally attest that they have not subsequently tested positive prior to visiting.
 - Homes should ensure that **support workers who provide direct care to residents** provide proof of a negative COVID-19 test result in the past week and verbally attest that they have not subsequently tested positive (unless the support worker requires immediate access to the home in an emergency situation).
 - Homes should continue to ask support workers who do **not** provide direct care to residents to verbally attest to having received a negative COVID-19 test result in the past two weeks and not subsequently tested positive.
 - Proof of a negative COVID-19 test result may be demonstrated by providing the home the results of the test (e.g. printout or on a mobile device showing the individual's name, test date and result). Homes must ensure that this collection of personal health information and any subsequent use or disclosure complies with the *Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004* (PHIPA).
- The Ministry's COVID-19 Visiting Policy, effective November 16, 2020, remains in effect.
- With respect to visitors to long-term care homes located in public health unit regions in the Green-Prevent or Yellow-Protect levels, the procedures will remain the same as in the COVID-19 Visiting Policy, effective November 16, 2020:
 - Homes should ask all **caregivers** and all **support workers** to verbally attest to having received a negative COVID-19 test result in the past two weeks and not subsequently tested positive prior to visiting.
 - Homes should ask any **general visitor visiting indoors** to verbally attest to having received a negative COVID-19 test result in the past two weeks and not subsequently tested positive.

These procedures are critical to protecting the health, safety and well-being of residents, staff and visitors to long-term care homes and are intended to support stabilization in long-term care homes and prevent them from reaching a more critical state.

While surveillance testing is an important measure for reducing the risk of COVID-19, long-term care homes should also continue to implement their protocols for infection prevention and control (IPAC), physical distancing, personal protective equipment (PPE) and hand hygiene. Further, long-term care homes continue to be responsible for implementing active COVID-19 screening of all staff, visitors and others entering the home (with the exception of first responders) as per Directive #3 issued by the Chief Medical Officer of Health. Any additional staffing required by long-term care homes to support testing, implement IPAC protocols and/or conduct active screening may be eligible as a COVID-19-related expense.

Thank you for your continued support and continued efforts in response to the COVID-19 pandemic as you implement these initiatives over the coming days.

Sincerely,

(original signed by)

Richard Steele
Deputy Minister

cc:

Donna Duncan, CEO, Ontario Long-Term Care Home Association
Brent Gingerich, Chair, Board of Directors, Ontario Long-Term Care Home Association
Lisa Levin, CEO, AdvantAge Ontario
Jane Sinclair, Chair, Board of Directors, AdvantAge Ontario
Brian Pollard, Assistant Deputy Minister, Long-Term Care Capital Development Division
Sheila Bristo, Assistant Deputy Minister, Long-Term Care Operations Division
Janet Hope, Assistant Deputy Minister, Long-Term Care Policy Division
Janice Crawford, Director, Legal Services Branch
William Hatanaka, Board Chair, Ontario Health
Matthew Anderson, CEO, Ontario Health

Attachments:

Long-Term Care Home Surveillance Testing FAQs