

LTC Response and Recovery Advisory Update

June 2021

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CONTACT US

Ministry of Long-Term Care
MLTCpandemicresponse@ontario.ca

Response and Recovery Advisory Committee

The Ministry of Long-Term Care created a Response and Recovery Advisory Committee to provide input on:

- responding to ongoing challenges during the pandemic
- preparing the long-term care sector for potential future surges
- the development of an action-oriented long-term care recovery plan

The committee brings together a diverse set of voices and expertise from the seniors' care and broader health care sectors. Several task teams have been created to focus on specific issues, and provide advice to the committee on:

- isolation, vacancy and occupancy policies
- near-term staffing
- visitor and caregiver policies, as well as testing and screening policies
- infection prevention and control
- long-term care leadership and training
- medical leadership
- sector communications
- emergency preparedness

Membership on these task teams includes residents and families, home staff administrators and directors of care, public health officials and government representatives.

The work of the committee is being done in parallel with work already underway to modernize long-term care with a focus on integrating care, improving quality of care and oversight, strengthening staffing, and advancing infrastructure projects.

This newsletter has been created to provide an update to homes, residents and families on actions undertaken by the ministry drawing on the collaborative input provided through the committee.

Vaccination



An estimated 99% of residents have received both doses of vaccine. As well, approximately 90% of staff have received at least their first dose, with approximately 77% having two doses. Virtually all essential caregivers have had at least their first dose of a vaccine.

Maximizing vaccination in the long-term care sector is a top priority for the Ministry. We continue to work with our health system partners to make sure:

- all residents receive their second shots
- new residents are vaccinated before entering the home wherever possible
- staff and caregivers have convenient access to vaccination

With increased vaccine supply, the province added high-risk health care workers – which includes nurses, personal support workers, and essential caregivers in long-term care homes – to the list of those eligible to receive their second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine earlier than the extended four-month interval.

In addition, the ministry is requiring homes to put in place a COVID-19 immunization policy as an additional tool to promote vaccine education and uptake. Homes will have the policy in place by July 1, 2021. Staff, student placements and volunteers will need to do one of three things:

1. Provide proof of vaccination against COVID-19
2. Provide a documented medical reason for not being vaccinated
3. Participate in an educational program.

Vaccines are one of the best tools we have to protect long-term care residents. The ministry encourages everyone to do their part and “get the shot” as soon as they are able.

The evolving response

Definition of an Outbreak

With a high number of residents vaccinated, it was possible to update the definition of an outbreak for long-term care and retirement homes.

This means fewer homes will need to impose restrictions that affect quality of life, while still ensuring an appropriate and rapid response to any COVID-19 cases detected.

As of April 7, 2021 the definition of an outbreak is:

- two or more lab-confirmed cases (resident, staff or visitor) in a home
- within a 14-day period
- that have an epidemiological link, and
- where at least one person could have reasonably acquired their infection in the home.

A single resident case constitutes a **suspect outbreak** under the new definition.

These changes were developed in collaboration with public health experts. Fewer declared outbreaks will provide relief and a better quality of life for residents while supporting efforts to safely move people into homes from hospitals and communities.

For more details around this and other changes, please read the [COVID-19 guidance document for long-term care homes in Ontario](#).



Supporting Resident Wellness

The impact of infection control measures and restrictions on long-term care residents is top of mind for residents, their families, homes and every partner in the sector. As the pandemic has evolved, the response has sought to balance the risks faced by residents from the pandemic and the restrictions required to control it, and to adjust policy and guidance to long term care homes accordingly.

With widespread vaccination in the sector and improving conditions provincially, the ministry is working closely with public health experts to find ways to boost opportunities to socialize, while remaining vigilant about COVID-19.

Just this past month restrictions have been eased so that residents can now:

- go out for a walk in the immediate vicinity of the home
- leave the home for essential absences such going to the pharmacy or grocery store
- fully immunized residents will be able to partake in absences for day and overnight social outings and trips
- resume communal dining, indoor events and gatherings

- have close contact such as holding hands for those residents and their caregivers who are both fully immunized
- have outdoor visits with their loved ones
- residents with mobility limitations or health conditions that make outdoor visits highly unlikely or impossible may have one general visitor for an indoor visit
- brief hugs for all residents, visitors and caregivers regardless of immunization status
- close contact for residents and general visitors who are both fully vaccinated
- fully immunized caregivers will no longer be required to wear eye protection

For more details around this and other changes, please read the [COVID-19 guidance document for long-term care homes in Ontario](#).

Over the next few weeks, the Response and Recovery Advisory Committee will continue to look at where further easing of requirements might be possible in a post-vaccination context. Approaches we develop will also consider the provincial reopening plan and the impact that may have on family visits.

Welcoming New Residents

Given the increasing demand for hospital care during the third wave, a call to action was issued by the ministry and Ontario Health to respond to the challenges facing our health care system. Homes have been asked to do everything they can over the coming weeks to admit or re-admit patients who are in hospital waiting for a long-term care placement.

This is about safely bringing individuals into immediately available spaces that meet their needs, and where the home has the staff necessary to accommodate new residents without compromising the care of existing ones. Bringing more residents into homes will be done in a safe way for current residents, staff, and the new residents themselves.

As of June 14, 2021, there have been over 3,000 transfers of ALC patients into long-term care homes. On average, 47 ALC patients have been discharged to LTC each day. We thank everyone involved in this call to action. We know working together as a system can save lives.

Staffing

Effective April 23, 2021 fully immunized long-term care home and retirement home staff are now able to work in more than one LTC home, health care setting or retirement home (unless otherwise directed by a local medical officer of health).

Response and Recovery Advisory Committee Members

Erin Hannah, Associate Deputy Minister of Long-Term Care, Pandemic Response

Scott Ovenden, Executive Vice President, Clinical Programs, Baycrest

Jeff Butler, Assistant Deputy Minister of Long-Term Care, Pandemic Response

Janet Hope, Assistant Deputy Minister of Long-Term Care, Policy

Sheila Bristo, Assistant Deputy Minister of Long-Term Care, Operations

Michael Hillmer, Assistant Deputy Minister of Health/Long-Term Care, Capacity Planning and Analytics

Dr. Barbara Yaffe, Associate Chief Medical Officer of Health

Alison Blair, Associate Deputy Minister of Health, Pandemic Response

Melanie Fraser, Associate Deputy Minister of Health, Health Services

Tara Wilson, A/Director, Ministry of Health, Hospitals and Capital Division

Amy Olmstead, A/Executive Lead, Ontario Health Teams Division

Catherine Brown, Interim Executive Lead, Ontario Health

Cynthia Martineau, Interim Regional Lead, East Region, Ontario Health

Tim Cronsberry, Manager, Public Health Ontario

Jacqueline Cureton, Assistant Deputy Minister for Seniors and Accessibility, Policy, Programs and Strategic Partnerships

Rhonda Crocker, CEO, Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre

Lynn Guerriero, President and Interim CEO, Niagara Health Systems

Lisa Levin, CEO, AdvantAge Ontario

Donna Duncan, CEO, Ontario Long Term Care Association

Samantha Peck, Executive Director, Family Councils Ontario

Dee Lender, Executive Director, Ontario Association of Residents' Councils

Dr. Benoit Robert, President, Ontario Long Term Care Clinicians

Jamie Schlegel, President and CEO of Schlegel Health Care

Jill Knowlton, Director of Long-Term Care Operations, Jarlette Health Services

Dr. San Ng, CEO, Yee Hong Centre for Geriatric Care

David Munch, CEO, Finlandia Village

Nelson Ribeiro, Director, Long-Term Care Homes, City of Toronto

Lee Mesic, Administrator, Pioneer Ridge