

April 12, 2023

MEMORANDUM TO: Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services
(MCCSS) funded and/or licensed service providers

FROM: Diane Gammon, (A) Regional Director, West Region

RE: April 12, 2023, Updates: COVID-19 Guidance and
Direction

Thank you for your persistence and commitment to helping to ensure the health and safety of residents and staff in congregate living settings throughout challenging respiratory illness seasons over the past three years. While it is recognized that the levels of COVID-19 in communities is likely to continue to fluctuate, it is time to reassess in continued consultation with our health partners, the current ministry-driven response measures that remain in place. I would like to share the following updates/changes:

- 1) COVID-19 Guidance: Long-Term Care Homes, Retirement Homes, and Other Congregate Living Settings for Public Health Units
Applies to service providers with congregate living settings.

On March 31, 2023, the Ministry of Health (MOH) released an updated version of the COVID-19 Guidance: Long-Term Care Homes, Retirement Homes, and Other Congregate Living Settings for Public Health Units. Highlights include:

- Removal of the recommendation for active screening of staff, students, volunteers, essential visitors, and general visitors as well as residents returning from absence,
- Removal of the recommendation for residents, clients, caregivers and visitors to mask outdoors, but the recommendation remains in place for staff when in close proximity to a resident,

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- A requirement for daily temperature checks only for residents who are symptomatic, close contacts, or cases of COVID-19 (LTC/RH only), and
- Removal of the section on physical distancing.

2) Interim Direction – Use of Rapid Antigen Testing

Applies to service providers with congregate living settings.

In alignment with similar measures being taken in other sectors, and with the widespread availability of vaccines and antivirals, implementation of Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) practices, and the high levels of immunity in the general community, the need for ongoing asymptomatic COVID-19 testing is no longer essential.

From this point forward MCCSS congregate living settings will no longer be required to use rapid antigen test kits to regularly screen staff and visitors.

While service providers will still have the option to implement their own asymptomatic screening testing policies, it is not recommended at this time. Access to rapid antigen test kits through the Provincial Antigen Screening Program will continue until June 2023.

As this change will bring to an end the MCCSS COVID-19 guidelines and interim direction, service providers are reminded that they should continue to refer to the Ministry of Health's [COVID-19 Guidance: Long-Term Care Homes, Retirement Homes, and Other Congregate Living Settings for Public Health Units](#) for most current information.

3) Regional Emergency Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Hubs

Applies to all service providers.

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As you are aware, PPE Emergency Hubs have been in operation in each region since January 2022 to maintain the regional capacity to mitigate any potential PPE distribution issues (e.g., unexpected delays in shipping, emergence of new variant, etc.).

These hubs have also been active during the transition from MCCSS PPE web order portals to the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery (MPBSD) PPE Supply Portal (PSP), and currently provide core PPE supplies to service providers in case of an emergency situation.

PPE Emergency hubs will commence wind down, and it is anticipated this activity will continue until July 31, 2023 (or until stock is depleted). During the wind down period, PPE Emergency hubs will make stock available to be redistributed throughout the region as appropriate. If your organization is interested in obtaining additional stock from the PPE Emergency Hub, please utilize the directions in *Appendix 2: Process for PPE Orders Using the Emergency Hubs* to request supplies and arrange delivery (if available) or pick up.

During the wind down, service providers can continue to obtain their core PPE supplies for emergency situations, from PPE Emergency Hubs, however, availability will be based on remaining stock. The current MPBSD (PSP) will continue to be active and available for orders, and agencies are encouraged to continue to place their orders through the PSP.

4) MOH Spring Vaccination

Applies to all service providers

The Ministry of Health's COVID-19 vaccine guidance has been updated to include Spring 2023 booster recommendations as part of the vaccine campaign focused on high-risk populations listed below **provided at least 6 months have passed** since their last vaccine dose or confirmed COVID-19 infection:

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- Individuals aged 65 and older
- Residents of Long-Term Care Homes, Retirement Homes, elder care lodges and other congregate living settings for seniors
- Individuals aged 18 and older living in congregate care setting for people with complex medical care needs
- Pregnant individuals
- Individuals aged 18 years and older who are moderately to severely immunocompromised
- Individuals aged 55 years and older who identify as First Nations, Inuit or Métis and their non-Indigenous household members aged 55 and older

(See Appendix1: COVID-19 Vaccine Resources & Updates)

Please note that the GO-VAXX/Mobile Clinics and Health Human Resources (HHR) Capacity Support Initiative ended on March 31, 2023. The Ministry of Health continues to work with all health care partners, including Public Health Units, pharmacies, hospitals, Indigenous-led vaccination clinics, and primary care offices, to ensure COVID-19 vaccines are available and accessible and will continue working with Public Health Units to target areas with low vaccination rates.

Moving forward, MCCSS will continue to engage our health and other congregate care ministry partners and continue to monitor any changes in direction. This will include updating of the ministry's COVID-19 reporting requirements for which updated instructions will be distributed shortly.

For questions or concerns related to any of these updates, please continue to reach out to your Program Supervisor and/or Ministry contact.

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Placing agencies and/or service providers that contract with a third party for the provision of services are asked to please share relevant information with any unlicensed outside paid resources (OPRs) and/or third parties.

Aussi disponible en français

Sincerely,



Diane Gammon
(A) Regional Director, West Region

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APPENDIX 1: COVID-19 Vaccine Resources & Updates:

- Ministry of Health COVID-19 Booster Dose Recommendation Tool
 - Interactive tool that supports individuals' ability to identify the appropriate time to receive a booster dose and stay up to date.
- SickKids' COVID-19 Vaccine Consult Service will close as of April 1, 2023.
- Scarborough Health Network's VaxFacts Clinic
 - A free physician-run phone consult service that supports community members and families to get accurate information about COVID-19 vaccines, childhood vaccines, influenza vaccines, mpox (Monkeypox), and preventative health counselling
- Solutions for Kids in Pain (SKIP) Updated Vaccine Pain & Needle Fear Resources (kidsinpain.ca)
 - This handout includes resources for families and health professionals to support vaccine uptake
- SickKids COVID-19 Learning Hub
 - This site includes comprehensive one-stop shop for COVID-19 resources (videos, handouts, and articles)

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APPENDIX 2: Process for PPE Orders Using the Emergency Hubs:

PPE Products available through Emergency Hubs (product availability varies based on availability of remaining stock).

- Disinfectant Wipes
- Face Shields Reusable
- Face Shields Disposable
- Nitrile Gloves (XS,S,M,L,XL)
- Hand Sanitizer (236ml, 1L, and 4 L)
- Isolation Gowns (Level 1, 2 and 3)
- 3M N95 Respirators
- N95 Fit Test Solution, FT1, FT12
- Surgical Masks
- Rapid Antigen Test Kits
- Eye Goggles

Process for PPE Orders Using the Emergency Hubs

To schedule a delivery/pick-up, please contact the closest PPE Hub identified for your region by phone or email. The hubs' contact will advise about the availability of the PPE type, quantity, and will arrange a delivery to the agency site or pick up from the hub's location.

North Community Living Greater Sudbury
450 Notre Dame, Unit 103
Sudbury ON P3C 5K8
Contact: Sherry Salo, 705-671-7181 x200, ssalo@clgs.ca

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Community Living Algoma

120 White Oak Drive

Sault Ste. Marie ON P6B 4J8

Contact: Sarah Bernabucci, 705-255-0242, sarah_bernabuccij@cla-algoma.org

First Step Women's Shelter

40 First Avenue (Box 1208)

Sioux Lookout ON P8T1B8

Contact: Tana Troniak, 807-737-1438, tanat@fsws.ca

Community Living Thunder Bay

1501 Dease Street

Thunder Bay ON P7C 5H3

Contact: Katie Gallagher, 807-622-1099, Katie.gallagher@cltb.ca

Community Living Kirkland Lake

4 Tweedsmuir Road

Kirkland Lake ON P2N 1H9

Contact: Lauri Lambert, 705-567-9331, lauri.lambert@communitylivingkl.com

Community Living Timmins

166 Brousseau Avenue

Timmins ON P4N 5Y4

Contact: Johanne Rondeau-Bernier, 705-268-8811, jrondeau@cltic.ca

Hands TheFamilyHelpNetwork.ca

(Algonquin Child and Family Services)

23 Ball's Drive

Bracebridge ON P1L 1T1

Contact: Lexi Deece-Cassidy, 705-706-1564, ldeece-cassidy@handsfhn.ca

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East Career Services of Brockville

89 Hubble Street

Brockville ON K6V 4K6

Contact: Dave Smith, 613-342-5775 x33, dave@careerservices.ca

West Bethesda Community Services

3950 Fly Road, Building #9

Vineland ON L0R 2C0

Contact: Sandie Narsansky, 905-941-2022, snarsansky@bethesdaservices.com

PHSS

620 Colborne Street, Unit 101

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Contact: Linda Antony, 226-448-1004 lindaa@phsscommunity.com

Bruce Peninsula Association for Community Living

99 Durham Street,

Walkerton ON N0G2V0

Contact: Laura Balint, 226-668-5610, lbaint@bpacl.ca

Central Community Living Toronto

and 50 Fairfax Cres.

Toronto Scarborough ON M1L 1Z8

Contact: PPEPooling@cltoronto.ca, 416-371-3564, Dave Scott,
dscott@cltoronto.ca

Alternate Contact: Nick Hadjiyianni, 416-558-7956, nhadjiyianni@cltoronto.ca

Notes: Typical hours of operation Mon-Fri, 9AM - 5PM

Emergency after hours, weekend, and holiday requests can be accommodated,
and staff made available.

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