

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

FROM: Eden Cantkier
Regional Director, West Region

RE: **November 15, 2023, Updates: Outbreak Prevention
Guidance, CRRF/CCSF and Reminders**

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to helping ensure the health and safety of residents and staff in congregate living settings throughout the challenging respiratory illness seasons over the past few years. As we continue to work through the current season, I would like to share the following updates and reminders:

1) Guidelines for Outbreak Prevention and Control in Congregate Living Settings
Applies to service providers with congregate living settings.

The Ministry of Health will be releasing consolidated Covid, respiratory and Gastrointestinal Illness guidelines for outbreak prevention and control in Congregate Living Settings. Further details will be shared once released.

2) MOH Fall Vaccinations
Applies to all service providers.

The Ministry of Health's COVID-19 Vaccine Guidance has been updated to include Fall 2023 vaccination recommendations to help ensure as many Ontarians as possible are up to date with their COVID-19 vaccines to support protection against severe COVID-19 cases, including hospitalization and death.

The Ministry of Health continues to work with Public Health Units to help ensure vaccines are available and accessible.

3) Covid Residential Relief Fund (CRRF)-Covid Community Support Fund (CCSF)
Applies to all service providers.

In response to updated and evolving public health guidance, including the removal of most public health measures, eligible expenses for the CRRF-CCSF were restricted as of July 1, 2023 to expenses related to suspected or confirmed positive case(s) in accordance with current health guidance. Allowable expenses include additional staffing directly related to positive or suspected COVID cases (i.e., to backfill for staff absences) and PPE related requests that are directly related to positive cases, and *not* readily available through the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery (MPBSD) PPE Supply Portal.

Please note that **the CRRF-CCSF will end as of March 31, 2024**, allowing for continued coverage for the current respiratory season. Final dates to submit expenses will be communicated.

4) Available Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) Support

Applies to service providers with congregate living settings.

The Ministry of Health continues to oversee local IPAC Hubs, which remain as a key resource for MCCSS-funded, licensed and/or direct operated service providers. If you are not familiar with how to contact your local IPAC Hub, please contact IPACHubs@ontario.ca.

MCCSS continues to work closely with the Ministry of Health to develop a model for IPAC that reflects the needs of the variety of MCCSS-funded and/or licensed congregate living sectors while ensuring a sustainable IPAC infrastructure (e.g., IPAC Hubs) that provides foundational and preventive supports, and advice for service providers.

As a reminder, the IPAC Champion initiative was a support that was made available as part of the COVID-19 response within your local community. The IPAC Champions played a valued role in making local connections and linkages between our health system partners and MCCSS settings/sectors. As the course of the pandemic and the related response evolved, the role of the IPAC Champion wound down as of September 30, 2023.

London

217 York Street, Suite 203,
London ON, N6A 5R1, P.O. Box 5217
Tel: 519-438-5111 | Fax: 519-672-9510
Toll Free: 1-800-265-4197 | TTY: 519-663-5276

217, rue York, bureau 203,
London ON, N6A 5R1, C.P. 5217
Tél: 519 438-5111 | Téléc.: 519 672-9510
Sans frais: 1 800 265-4197 | ATS: 519 663-5276

Hamilton

119 King Street West, 7th Floor
Hamilton, ON, L8P 4Y7
Tel: 905 521-7318 | Fax: 905 546-8277
TTY: 905-546-8276

119, rue King ouest, 7^e étage
Hamilton, ON L8P 4Y7
Tél: 905 521-7318 | Téléc.: 905 546-8277
ATS: 905-546-8276

Windsor

270 Erie Street East
Windsor, ON, N9A 7E3, P.O. Box 1810, Station A
Tel: 519-254-5355 | Fax: 519-255-1152
Toll Free: 1-800-419-4919 | TTY: 519-254-4850

270, rue Erie Est
Windsor ON N9A 7E3, C.P. 1810, Succ A
Tél: 519 254-5355 | Téléc.: 519 255-1152
Sans frais : 1 800 419-4919 | ATS: 519 254-4850

5) Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Applies to all service providers.

In preparation for and throughout the respiratory illness season, service Providers should ensure they have sufficient PPE on hand.

Fit-Testing

As you are aware, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) distribution transitioned to the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery (MPBSD) through Supply Ontario's PPE Supply Portal (PSP) last year, and has subsequently transferred to Supply Ontario. Supply Ontario continues to offer a N95 fit testing program for service providers without access to internal fit testing.

For MCCSS funded and/or licensed service providers that have internal capacity to conduct their own N95 fit-testing, Supply Ontario has confirmed they are able to provide non-Niosh certified N95 respirators (1870+ and the alternative Medicom model) to facilitate fit-testing of staff as required. In order to access these non-Niosh certified respirators for fit-testing, Supply Ontario is requesting that MCCSS funded and/or licensed service providers indicate through the attached report where they have internal fit testing capacity. Submitting the report will enable the service provider to order once an account has been set up. Service providers are expected to test to the 1870+ first, as it is the respirator of first choice for the province, and only subsequently test to alternative models for the small number of staff who can not fit-test to the 1870+.

Once fit-testing has been completed, service providers are required to report the outcome(s) of their fit-testing to Supply Ontario indicating the aggregate number of staff fitted to the 1870+ or alternative model. Service providers are to use the same template form, which will allow for the ordering of appropriate fit-tested models through the Supply Ontario PPE portal.

Please note that in order to enable ordering of alternative respirators within the Supply Ontario PPE portal, service providers must either access fit-testing through the Supply Ontario program or report on their own internal fit testing capacity and associated outcomes to Supply Ontario.

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Hamilton, ON L8P 4Y7
Tél: 905 521-7318 | Téléc.: 905 546-8277
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270 Erie Street East
Windsor, ON, N9A 7E3, P.O. Box 1810, Station A
Tel: 519-254-5355 | Fax: 519-255-1152
Toll Free: 1-800-419-4919 | TTY: 519-254-4850

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Windsor ON N9A 7E3, C.P. 1810, Succ A
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HEPA Replacement Filters

Supply Ontario has begun shipping HEPA replacement filters to service providers who received original HEPA filter units from the Supply Ontario PPE stockpile.

For those MCCSS funded and/or licensed service providers who initially received HEPA filters directly from MCCSS, replacement filters may potentially be available next year, however, it is unknown at this time whether stock will be available. In the interim, HEPA replacement filters remain an eligible expense through the CRRF. Questions related to PPE can be directed to Sco.supplies@supplyontario.ca.

Provincial Antigen Screening Program (PASP)

In June 2023, MOH confirmed MCCSS sectors' continued eligibility to order rapid antigen tests (RATs) through PASP. As the province prepares for the 2023-24 respiratory season, we are reminding you of your continued eligibility to order RATs through the PPE Supply Portal until December 31, 2023. MCCSS service providers not currently enrolled in PASP can enroll through the [Ontario Together Portal](#). Once enrolled, you will be able to order rapid antigen tests through the PPE Supply Portal until December 31, 2023.

6) Reminders

Staff Contingency Planning

Throughout the respiratory season, there may be a significant rise in illness that could lead to staff shortages and impact service continuity. All service providers should continue to have a risk mitigation strategy in place to address possible service disruption due to staffing shortages. The strategy should outline intentional efforts to collaborate across similar service providers at the community level.

The [Checklist: Significant Loss of Residential Direct Support Staff](#) can be used as a tool to assist with contingency planning. Additional resources created/collected by the developmental services sector may also benefit other sectors and can be found on the [Real Xchange](#).

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Windsor, ON, N9A 7E3, P.O. Box 1810, Station A
Tel: 519-254-5355 | Fax: 519-255-1152
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Ventilation and Air Filtration

As the seasons change, residents, staff and visitors will be spending more time indoors, so service providers are reminded to continue to implement strategies to support increased ventilation and indoor air quality.

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

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,



Eden Cantkier
Regional Director

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