

April 9, 2021

Memorandum To: MCCSS-funded Transfer Payment Recipients (TPRs) and Children's Licenced Outside Paid Resources (OPRs) that provide Services and Supports in Congregate Living Settings

From: Karen Singh  
Director, Central Region

Subject: **COVID-19 April 2021 Update #2**

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Building on last week's announcement of a provincewide emergency brake, the Ontario government, in consultation with the Chief Medical Officer of Health and other health experts, has declared a third [provincial emergency](#) under s 7.0.1 (1) of the **Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act** (EMPCA).

A province-wide Stay-at-Home order effective April 8, 2021 has also been issued requiring everyone to remain at home except for essential purposes, such as going to the grocery store or pharmacy, accessing health care services (including getting vaccinated), for outdoor exercise, or for work that cannot be done remotely. As Ontario's health care capacity is threatened, the Stay-at-Home order, and other new and existing public health and workplace safety measures will work to preserve public health system capacity, safeguard vulnerable populations, allow for progress to be made with vaccinations and save lives.

### **What this means for congregate care settings**

In follow up to yesterday's announcement regarding these new measures, I am writing to confirm that the direction provided in the memo issued to you on April 1, 2021 related to the implementation of **ENHANCED precautions** in all MCCSS-funded congregate care settings remains in effect.

Please share this communication broadly with any/all providers that your organization contracts/sub-contracts with to provide congregate care supports.

### **Resident masking**

Please continue to, wherever possible and as appropriate, encourage residents who are exempt from the mandatory masking requirement to wear surgical/procedure masks when they are not alone - **both while at home and in the community. This includes residents who have received the first dose of their COVID-19 vaccine.** The ministry will ensure PPE is made available for each resident and masks can continue to be ordered through the existing [PPE survey](#).

### **Provincial Antigen Screening Program (PASP)**

In February 2021, our ministry issued a call for expressions of interest for congregate care service providers to voluntarily participate in the PASP. Rapid antigen screening provides service agencies with another safety measure to help reduce the spread of COVID-19. Since its launch, the program has evolved to:

- Include the use of additional testing types (i.e. BD Veritor – which has been identified as the primary modality for congregate care settings),
- Expand target populations for screening to include congregate care residents and essential visitors where deemed appropriate by participant service providers,
- Permit supervised self-swabbing as an additional method of specimen collection.

Expressions of interest for the PASP are still being accepted via the [EOI survey](#).

Costs related to participation in this program are deemed eligible expenses under the participant's MCCSS transfer payment agreement within existing financial flexibility. Pressures resulting from exceptional challenges related to program participation may be eligible for support through the COVID-19 Residential Relief Fund (CRRF) pending confirmation with the ministry.

### **Other Measures**

While direct interactions connected to the workplace and congregate care settings are key, what we do in our personal lives also contributes directly to infection risks in those settings. All Ontarians including staff of congregate care settings **MUST** adhere strictly to practices in their personal life that help stop the spread of COVID-19. This includes adhering to all public health measures that have been put in place under the third [provincial emergency](#) under s 7.0.1 (1) of the ***Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act*** (EMPCA).

Staff, volunteers or visitors who are experiencing, or have members of their household experiencing ANY [COVID-19 symptoms](#), even if mild symptoms, should quarantine and follow direction from their local public health unit regarding next steps. COVID-19 testing should be pursued in accordance with current [provincial guidelines](#). Active screening practices at congregate living sites should be similarly rigorous.

We also encourage you, your staff, residents and visitors to download the COVID-19 alert mobile app to support strong contact tracing and help protect yourself and your community.

If you have questions about any of the measures outlined above, please contact your ministry program supervisor.

Sincerely,



Karen Singh  
Director, Central Region