

Ministry of Health

COVID-19 Guidance: Home and Community Care Providers

Version 3 – March 18, 2020

This guidance is important for you to read and understand if you are a home and community health care provider who may encounter:

- Persons symptomatic for COVID-19;
- Persons who have COVID-19 and do not need to stay in a hospital (i.e., can be safely isolated at home); OR
- A home care patient/client who has recently travelled from out of Canada.

Please check the Ministry of Health (MOH) COVID-19 website regularly for updates to this document, the latest case definition, FAQs, and other pertinent information:

<http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus>

Screening

1. The latest case definition for screening is available on the MOH [COVID-19 website](#).
2. All clients should be screened by the appropriate staff member by phone before appointments are scheduled (e.g., by personal support workers, schedulers, managers, etc.) using the latest case definition for COVID-19.
3. Staff should also ask about any other person who will be in the home during the appointment (e.g., visitor or family member) and where appropriate, screen this person too.

Positive Screening: What to do

4. If either the patient or other person in the home screens positive, staff should call the local public health unit to discuss the most appropriate setting for clinical assessment.

- If the care provider is not a practitioner with a duty to report diseases of public health significance to local public health, they should follow their organization's relevant policies and procedures, or contact their supervisor or Medical Director for guidance.
5. If individuals are referred to hospital (e.g., emergency department) for testing, the staff member and/or agency should coordinate with the hospital, local public health unit, paramedic services, and the patient, to make safe arrangements for travel to the hospital that maintains isolation of the patient. All referrals to hospital should be made to a triage nurse.
 6. If a patient is very ill and requires acute care, the staff person should call an ambulance and let the paramedic call-takers know that the client is symptomatic for COVID-19 virus.

Testing for COVID-19

7. All testing for COVID-19 will take place in hospitals or arranged in consultation with the local public health unit. Community care providers must not conduct testing.

Reporting of Positive Screening

8. The home and community care providers should use routine reporting procedures to contact their local Public Health unit. COVID-19 is a designated disease of public health significance (O. Reg. 135/18) and thus reportable under the [Health Protection and Promotion Act](#).

Occupational Health & Safety

9. If a care provider is conducting a patient visit to the home of someone who is a suspected or confirmed case for COVID-19, providers should use routine practices with additional precautions (contact and droplet). These precautions include:
 - Hand hygiene
 - Wearing appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) including the use of gloves, gowns, surgical/procedure masks, and eye protection.
 - The patient should be instructed to wear a procedure mask (if tolerated) while the care worker is providing care.

- 10.** Care providers should be delaying care if possible and only providing essential medical services. The patient should be instructed to wear a procedure mask (if tolerated) while the care worker is providing care.

- 11.** Detailed general occupational health and safety guidelines for COVID-19 are available on the Ministry of Health [COVID-19 website](#). Refer to [Emergency Homecare Protocols](#) from the Ontario Personal Support Workers Association for additional information.