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March 11, 2020

MEMORANDUM TO: Long-Term Care Homes Sector

FROM: Brian Pollard
Assistant Deputy Minister
Long-Term Care Operations Division
Ministry of Long-Term Care

SUBJECT: **COVID-19 Updates**

The Ministry of Health continues to coordinate the response to the 2019 novel coronavirus with support from the Ministry of Long-Term Care and other key stakeholders. We will continue to keep the sector updated as relevant recommendations and plans arise from these discussions.

****Active Screening Required for Staff and Visitors****

We are instructing long-term care homes to begin the active screening of all staff, students, volunteers and visitors. ANYONE who fails any part of the screening process will not be allowed in the home and advised to contact Telehealth or their public health unit.

- Homes are being asked to have a screener at the home's entrance to conduct the active screening during business hours. Outside of these times, the home's charge nurse/administrator should develop processes and procedures to ensure that all people entering the home are screened and visits are logged. These procedures are to apply seven days a week 24 hours a day.
- Long-term care homes should instruct all staff, students and volunteers to self-screen for COVID-19 at home. All staff, students and volunteers with symptoms of an acute respiratory infection must not come to work and must report their symptoms to the long-term care home. All staff should be aware of early signs and symptoms of acute respiratory infection (such as fever, cough or shortness of breath).
- See the [self-monitoring](#) information for further guidance.
- See the [latest case definition](#), as well as the up to date [COVID-19 Affected Areas List](#).

****Active Screening Required for Residents****

We are instructing long-term care homes to begin the active screening of all resident admissions, re-admissions and returning residents. ANYONE who fails any part of the screening process will be placed in isolation.

- Long-term care homes must consult with the local public health unit and the resident's primary care provider if residents exhibit symptoms or have had exposure to or if there has been confirmation of transmission of COVID-19, in order to determine any additional public health or clinical actions.
- As of March 09, 2020, when homes submit specimens for standard respiratory testing, these specimens will also be tested for COVID-19 automatically. There is no change to your usual practices for submitting respiratory outbreak specimens.
- See the [latest case definition](#), as well as the up to date [COVID-19 Affected Areas List](#).

Emerging information on COVID-19 suggests elderly individuals and those with underlying health conditions are at increased risk of severe outcomes. In addition to active screening, long-term care homes should follow the guidance for [respiratory outbreak](#) and [COVID-19](#) prevention from the Ministry of Health. This includes prevention activities such as:

- Posting signage and advising visitors who have travelled to [affected areas](#) or have been exposed to a case of COVID-19 in the last 14 days to postpone their visit.
- Posting signage and advising all visitors who are ill to postpone their visit.
- Ensuring resident and visitor signage on hand hygiene and cough etiquette is posted and that there is availability and accessibility of hand hygiene throughout the facility.
- Keeping staff and residents informed on COVID-19.
- Reminding staff to be [monitoring themselves for illness](#) and to stay at home when they are sick.
- Developing policies for managing staff who may have been exposed to a case of COVID-19 and developing staff coverage plans.
- Assessing incoming residents for respiratory symptoms and potential exposures to COVID-19.
- Monitoring residents for new respiratory symptoms or fever.
- Quickly identifying and isolating any resident with acute respiratory illness or fever.
- Ensuring signage is clear and that personal protective equipment (gowns, gloves, masks and eye protection) for health care workers are available and accessible for care of patients with acute respiratory illness.
- Reporting any suspected COVID-19 illness in residents or staff to the local public health unit.

We would also like to draw your attention to important resources that will help the long-term care sector prepare for, and address this issue:

► **[Guidance for the Health Sector](#)**

This website provides:

- a series of guidance documents;
- the latest case definition for COVID-19;
- signage for long-term care homes; and
- related links.

► **[Public Health Ontario, COVID-19](#)**

This website provides regularly updated statistics on cases in Ontario as well as other COVID-19 resource material. Public Health Ontario also has guidelines on [how to self-isolate and self-monitor](#).

► **Additional Information**

- A guide for the [Control of Respiratory Infection Outbreaks in Long-Term Care Homes](#).
- [General information](#) for the public regarding COVID-19 in Ontario.

The well-being of residents in long-term care is our top priority. We will continue to monitor this situation closely and ensure that we are prepared. If there are any related questions or concerns, we encourage our health care sector partners to contact the Health System Emergency Management Branch at 1-866-212-2272 (24/7) or during business hours at eocoperations.moh@ontario.ca.

We thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. Pollard", written in a cursive style.

Brian Pollard
Assistant Deputy Minister

c: Deputy Minister of Long-Term Care