

April 17, 2020

**MEMORANDUM TO: Health System Organizations and Providers**

**SUBJECT: Update on COVID-19 Preparations and Actions**

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The focus of both today's Command Table and the special meeting convened yesterday was on actions to enable the rapid implementation of the government's [COVID-19 Action Plan for Protecting Long-Term Care Homes](#). These include:

- Providing enhanced wraparound supports to long-term care homes, including testing, outbreak management and staffing supports, beginning with homes that are identified as highest-risk. These supports are based on a risk assessment of every long-term care home in the province from both a public health and an operational perspective and will be tailored to each home's needs.
  - Rapid support will be deployed to homes experiencing critical staffing shortages; and
  - Proactive outreach will be made to lower-risk homes to prevent outbreaks and support continued stability in operations.
- Support from the Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH), the Ministry of Long-Term Care and Ontario Health on implementation of new guidance, including the [updated CMOH Directive #3](#). This updated directive reflects the Order for long-term care home staff working to work in only one location and provides additional information on outbreak management and response.
  - We are also ensuring there is clarity on how health care workers can support care in long-term care homes while continuing to be eligible to work in their home organization. The Ministry of Health, Ministry of Long-term Care and Ontario Health are working with sector partners to identify and remove barriers to the deployment of staff from other health sectors into long-term care homes.
  - This includes an Emergency Order approved on April 16, 2020 that will enable home care and community care workers to work in other settings, including long-term care homes.
- Public health units have started testing asymptomatic residents and staff in LTC homes in alignment with [new testing guidance](#). In addition, 21 homes have done additional testing of additional asymptomatic residents and staff outside of the testing

guidance, to help understand the spread of the virus. The Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, working with the Ministry of Long-Term Care and Ontario Health, will review results from these tests and work to refine testing guidance as appropriate to support continued testing of asymptomatic residents and staff.

The swift support from the health sector that has already been extended to long-term care homes across the province is very positive. Over the last several days, hospitals, in partnership with public health units and others in the community, have provided outreach to homes in their areas (long-term care homes, and in some areas, retirement homes and other congregate settings).

Prioritizing those in outbreak, the partners are offering supports on infection prevention and control, testing, staffing and supplies and equipment. This continued collaboration is essential to protecting long-term care home residents and staff, and our action plan will continue to rely on the health sector to lend its support.

Mobilizing the health system's resources to support the province's long-term care homes remains our first priority. We are convening a special Command Table over the weekend to ensure that every part of our implementation plan is rolling out at pace and is effectively delivering on our commitments in the *Action Plan*.

Sincerely,

*(original signed by)*

Helen Angus  
Deputy Minister  
Ministry of Health

Dr. David Williams  
Chief Medical Officer of Health  
Ministry of Health

Matthew Anderson  
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Ontario Health