

November 20, 2020

All Staff in Licensed Supportive Living, Long-Term Care and Hospices

RE: Rising COVID-19 Case Numbers

Dear Staff:

I want to express my deep gratitude for your work. I know the last nine months have been an extremely challenging time, especially for those working on the front lines. I appreciate the critical role you play to keep the residents you care for and your colleagues safe.

I am writing to express my concern with the rising number of COVID-19 cases in Alberta. As you know, residents in congregate settings have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. I know that each of the residents you may have lost has impacted you. Each death is a loss that so many grieve.

I urge you to remain even more careful than you have been in following public health guidance. It is important both when working and when you are off, to continue to practice physical distancing, hand hygiene, frequent monitoring for symptoms, staying home when sick, and adhering to current gathering limits even within your own homes. It is these measures that prevent the spread of COVID-19. I want to be clear that staff should not be going to work when they are sick, even with only mild symptoms. I recognize you are committed to the residents you serve and you want to be there for them and for your team members, but this is critical to preventing introduction of COVID-19 into care facilities. Financial support for those staying home if sick or exposed to COVID-19 is available and can be accessed through <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/benefits/covid19-emergency-benefits.html>.

It is normal to feel overwhelmed during this unprecedented time. Many of your workplaces have had outbreaks. You have cared for more complex residents to keep them out of hospitals. You have quickly adjusted to the many changes from my updated Orders, as we have learned more about COVID-19. You have supported residents as well as balanced the needs of your own friends and families. You have risen to the

occasion and I understand this may have caused or be causing you additional stress. I encourage you to reach out to people you trust to talk or access mental health supports, if needed. I also encourage you to take care of your own health, which could be as simple as taking a walk, reading a book or participating, with COVID-19 precautions, in any other activity you enjoy.

I recognize that this continues to be a challenging time and we are all tired of COVID-19. Please understand that the measures in place are the best known ways to help minimize the risk of COVID-19 to you, your loved ones, your residents, and other staff. We need to remain vigilant.

Thank you for your support and shared commitment to prevent the spread of COVID-19, and for the ongoing hard work you are putting in to keep your residents safe.

Yours sincerely,



Deena Hinshaw, BSc, MD, MPH, CCFP, FRCP
Chief Medical Officer of Health

cc: John Cabral, Assistant Deputy Minister, Health Service Delivery, Alberta Health
Trish Merrithew-Mercredi, Assistant Deputy Minister, Public Health and Compliance, Alberta Health