

October 19, 2021

AR 193514

All Licensed Supportive Living, Long-term Care and Hospice Operators and Staff

RE: Temporary Public Health Measures & Congregate Care Settings

Dear Operators and Staff:

Access to support and companionship from family and friends continues to be supported as **essential** to the maintenance of resident mental and physical health and wellbeing. As residents' risk tolerance varies across these settings, proof of vaccination for families and friends will not be a provincially mandated requirement. I am however implementing some increased required measures as noted below. In addition, operators have authority¹ to implement additional site-based policies and processes for COVID-19 prevention (including requiring proof of vaccine or rapid testing) as appropriate to local context and consideration of resident preferences. Once the site-based policies and processes have been developed, they will apply to all persons entering the site.

I have also asked that unvaccinated family and friends strongly reconsider their need to attend to the resident onsite, indoors and in-person before entering the site. Those who are not fully immunized are at a significantly higher risk to transmit COVID-19 to the other people living and working in the setting. Alternatives to onsite indoor in-person visits include outdoor visits, virtual visits, and telephone calls.

To continue to address the risk of COVID-19, please ensure strict adherence to [CMOH Order 37-2021](#). The measures within this order such as active symptom screening of staff and visitors, additional disinfecting and cleaning and isolation when needed continue to provide a high level of proactive protection against COVID-19 outbreaks and measures to prevent any spread within settings. As a result, we have seen significantly smaller and more controlled outbreaks than previous waves of COVID-19.

With the increased transmissibility of the delta variant we are facing in the fourth wave, I have issued additional temporary measures in [CMOH Order 49-2021](#), which requires:

- Visiting persons in all settings to wear a mask continuously (i.e. not only in common areas) unless there is a significant communication barrier; and

¹ [Supportive Living Accommodation Licensing Act, Nursing Homes Act](#)

- Long-term care and designated supportive living residents to be tested within 48 hours of hospital discharge (for new admissions from hospital and returns from hospital stays longer than 24 hours).
 - Residents must stay in their room and be placed on contact/droplet precautions in the facility until the negative test result is received.
 - This is not required for residents in other licensed supportive living setting (e.g. lodges) or hospices although some operators may implement rapid testing or other measures in these settings as an additional site-based policy and process.

When it comes to vaccine, I strongly recommend and encourage all Albertans, and especially all staff in these settings, to be fully immunized against COVID-19. This is the most important thing you can do to protect not only yourself, but also residents. Given that congregate care residents were among the first to receive vaccine doses and waning immunity, residents are now eligible and most have received their third dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. This will help prevent breakthrough infections in fully vaccinated individuals and help reduce ongoing transmission. I encourage staff and operators to support residents to access accurate, science-based information to make an informed decision. Please see the [Alberta COVID-19 Vaccine Program](#) webpage for details.

In addition to being fully immunized, wearing a mask continuously while indoors and staying home if you have any symptoms of COVID-19 (**even if mild and even if you are fully vaccinated**) are critical. We have seen many outbreaks started by individuals who have symptoms, but who have continued to be active within the site rather than isolating immediately.

Thank you for your continued support and dedication. As always, if you have questions, please reach out to asal@gov.ab.ca. We remain in this together.

Yours sincerely,



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Chief Medical Officer of Health

Attachment

cc: Evan Romanow, Assistant Deputy Minister, Health Service Delivery, Alberta Health

Trish Merrithew-Mercredi, Assistant Deputy Minister, Public Health and Compliance, Alberta Health

David O'Brien, Senior Program Officer, Provincial Seniors Health and Continuing Care, Alberta Health Services