

Ministry of Long-Term Care

Office of the Associate Deputy
Minister, Long-Term Care Policy
and Pandemic Response

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Ministère des Soins de longue durée

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January 27, 2022

MEMORANDUM TO: Long-Term Care Home Licensees

FROM: Erin Hannah
Associate Deputy Minister
LTC Policy and Pandemic Response

SUBJECT: LTC Pandemic Response Updates

Further to the memo on Friday, January 14th, I am writing today to provide an update on the deadline for third doses.

There has been excellent progress on third doses among staff. Based on COVax data, about 77% of eligible staff across all long-term care homes have received their third dose.

We understand there are challenges leading to some concerns about meeting the original deadline of January 28, 2022 for third doses as set out in the *Minister's Directive: Long-term care home COVID-19 immunization policy* (Minister's Directive). In response, the ministry has amended the Directive to extend the deadline to ensure staff and caregivers who are eligible for a third dose are able to get one and mitigating the risk of creating additional staffing pressures as we continue to face the Omicron wave.

The updated Directive requires all eligible staff, student placements, volunteers, support workers and caregivers to provide proof of having received a third dose by March 14th, unless they have a valid medical exemption. For those who are only eligible to receive a third dose after March 14th, they must provide proof of a third dose within 30 days of becoming eligible.

Notwithstanding the above, we strongly encourage everyone to receive their third dose as soon as possible after becoming eligible and ask homes to also continue promoting the importance of third doses, as well as fourth doses for residents.

As a reminder, boosters of the COVID-19 vaccine continue to provide the best protection against infection and severe illness. Many studies estimate little to no protective effect against infection with the Omicron variant six months after a second dose. Based on home-reported data, as of January 23, 2022, 88% of staff COVID-19 infections were among staff with two doses compared to those with three doses (despite the aforementioned 77% of eligible staff that are triple dosed). Boosters also help prevent severe illness and death due to COVID-19 which is why it is so important that your efforts to offer fourth doses to residents as soon as they become eligible (three months after receiving the third dose) continue in earnest.

The ministry has heard from homes that some staff indicated a preference for the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine as their third dose. I am pleased to relay that on January 25, 2022, the Ministry of Health communicated to public health units that it is eliminating the requirement to prioritize the Pfizer vaccine use for the 12-29 age group as the province now has confirmed stable supply over the coming weeks. This does not change the fact that the Moderna vaccine is also an effective vaccine for third doses, and it remains in stable supply in Ontario.

The Minister's Directive is attached reflecting the above changes. The Directive has also been updated to improve readability and understanding of the requirements. The Directive will be posted online in English and French as soon as possible. In addition, we have attached updated key messages on vaccination in English and French for you to share with staff and our home communities.

Other Information

The ministry is committed to alleviating the reporting burden on homes to ensure focus will remain on staffing resources for resident care during the Omicron wave.

In recognizing the potential impact on operations for homes, work is underway to postpone the Resident Assessment Instrument – Minimum Data Set (RAI-MDS) submission and Continuing Care Reporting System (CCRS) submission. The RAI-MDS assessments, care planning and other documentation required under the *Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007* and Ontario Regulation 79/10 remain mandatory and must be available to the Ministry of Long-Term Care inspectors during inspections. A communication will follow to all LTC homes outlining the plan.

While we firmly recognize the challenges homes are facing, we also encourage all homes to work closely with their Home and Community Care Support Services placement coordinators and hospital partners to support the transfer of patients designated Alternative Level Care (ALC) where there is staffing capacity and where it is safe to do so, including considering weekend transfer arrangements where possible. Please note that Ontario Health has communicated to hospital partners the importance of advance vaccine offers prior to transfers and the provision of additional medication and other supplies to support the best experience for prospective residents.

Thank you again for your continued hard work and dedication within long-term care and as an integral partner in the broader health care system as we see this wave

through, as well as for your ongoing promotion of vaccination which remains our best tool in the fight against COVID-19.

As always, should you have questions you may contact us at MLTCPandemicResponse@ontario.ca.

Sincerely,

Original signed by

Erin Hannah
Associate Deputy Minister
LTC Policy and Pandemic Response

Attachments (2):

- Minister's Directive on LTC Home COVID-19 Immunization Policy
- Vaccination Key Messages (English and French)

c: Nancy Matthews, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Long-Term Care (MLTC)
Dr. Catherine Zahn, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Health (MOH)
Dr. Kieran Moore, Chief Medical Officer of Health
Dr. Barbara Yaffe, Associate Chief Medical Officer of Health
Alison Blair, Associate Deputy Minister, Pandemic Response and Recovery Division, Ministry of Health (MOH)
Michael Hillmer, Assistant Deputy Minister, Capacity Planning and Analytics Division, MOH/MLTC
Lisa Levin, Chief Executive Officer, AdvantAge Ontario
Donna Duncan, Chief Executive Officer, Ontario Long Term Care Association
Monika Turner, Association of Municipalities of Ontario
Michael Jacek, Association of Municipalities of Ontario
Colleen Geiger, President and CEO (Acting), Public Health Ontario
Jeff Butler, Assistant Deputy Minister, LTC Operations Division, MLTC
Matthew Anderson, President and CEO, Ontario Health
Cynthia Martineau, CEO, Home and Community Care Support Services