

October 29, 2020

MEMORANDUM TO: Retirement Homes

FROM: Jacqueline Cureton
Assistant Deputy Minister
Seniors and Accessibility Programs, Policy and Strategy
Partnerships
Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility

SUBJECT: Fit Testing Supports for Retirement Homes Staff to
Respirator Masks

The health and well-being of Ontario's retirement home residents, staff continue to guide the government's response to COVID-19.

Recently, the Government updated [Directive 5 for Hospitals and Long-Term Care Homes](#) issued by the Chief Medical Officer of Health (Directive 5) to provide registered health care professionals and other health care workers with increased flexibility to establish need for N95 respirators to deliver care services to patients or residents. N95 respirators are an important piece of personal protective equipment (PPE) to protect workers from aerosolized particles of COVID-19. Recent changes to Directive 5 allowed for increased access to N95 respirators for regulated and unregulated health care workers in sectors including retirement homes.

Respirator training and fit testing is required for any employee that is required to wear a respirator to conduct their job, as outlined in [Ontario's Occupational Health and Safety Act](#) (OHSA). If respiratory protective equipment is used, employers are required to provide the appropriate equipment, maintain and store it properly, and ensure that it is properly fitted to the individual worker. A respirator fit test checks whether a respirator properly fits the face of someone who wears it. Properly fitting respirators are needed to ensure the proper level of protection is provided. In addition, a worker must also be trained in the care and use for the respirator they are fitted to.

While retirement homes continue to be responsible for fit testing and appropriate use training for their employees, the Province has established support to help homes that are not able to secure fit testing services through other channels. Homes are able to access this additional support through the Ontario Health [Critical PPE Escalation Portal](#) (see Appendix A for instructions). Deployment of this service to homes will be prioritized based on greatest need (i.e. homes in outbreak). Homes will be responsible for the costs associated with fit testing.

Fit testing through this channel will be provided by Levitt Safety. The cost will be determined by Levitt Safety once your needs are reviewed. To meet increased demand for N95 respirators and comply with new requirements under Directive 5, the below continuum of actions can be taken (please refer to Appendix B):

1. Continue to practice conservation and appropriate use;
2. Train an in-house fit tester to support ongoing fit test needs; and
3. Engage an external fit test service.

If homes are unable to access N95 through their regular suppliers and have a shortage of PPE, they may also continue to access government supply of N95 through the Ontario Health [Critical PPE Escalation Portal](#).

We want to acknowledge and thank retirement home operators, staff and other support workers for their ongoing and tireless work to support and care for resident safety and well-being.

For additional support and information, please see attached Guidance on Use of Reusable Elastomeric Respirators.

Sincerely,

Original Signed By

Jaqueline Cureton
Assistant Deputy Minister

c: Denise Cole, Deputy Minister, Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility
Sheila Bristo, Assistant Deputy Minister, Long-Term Care Operations Division
Jay O'Neill, Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority
Cathy Hecimovich, Ontario Retirement Communities Association
Lisa Levin, AdvantAge Ontario

Attachments:

- Appendix A: Instructions on Requesting Provincial Fit Testing Support
- Appendix B: Continuum of Actions
- Guidance on Use of Reusable Elastomeric Respirators