

**Ministry for Seniors  
and Accessibility**

Office of the Deputy Minister

6th Floor, Suite 600  
College Park  
777 Bay Street  
Toronto ON M7A 2J4  
Tel.: 416 212-2316

**Ministère des Services aux  
aînés et de l'Accessibilité**

Bureau du sous-ministre

6<sup>e</sup> étage, bureau 600  
College Park  
777, rue Bay  
Toronto ON M7A 2J4  
Tél.: 416 212-2316

January 25, 2021

**MEMORANDUM TO:** Retirement Home Licensees

**FROM:** Denise Allyson Cole  
Deputy Minister  
Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility

**SUBJECT:** **COVID-19 Vaccine Administration in Retirement Homes**

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As you know, thanks to the dedication and partnership between public health units (PHUs), hospitals and retirement homes (RHs), we continue to make steady progress in offering a first vaccine dose to RH residents, staff and essential caregivers in Peel, Toronto, York and Windsor-Essex.

We are continuing to expand the vaccination program to all long-term care (LTC) homes and high-risk RHs across the province. The slowdown in Pfizer production has meant adjusting our plan to focus on residents and provide second doses where scheduled. However, our overall commitment has not changed, and we will reach the remaining staff and essential caregivers as quickly as possible as more supply is received.

We are confirming now that we are proceeding with our plan to immunize all **long-term care, high-risk retirement, and elder care residents** across Ontario as quickly as possible, before the provincial goal of February. This means that homes in the 14 PHUs where first doses have not yet been available will be on an accelerated vaccination program to reach residents.

Successful vaccine administration continues to be reliant on the readiness of homes. Your local PHU will be contacting you to establish site-specific delivery plans based on the latest supply information and focused approach. The Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility, together with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Long-Term Care, has developed an assessment checklist (Attachment 1) to help you in your planning and preparation.

## Consent

Informed consent is a critical component of vaccine administration. As with all vaccines, consent must be secured in advance. If you have not already started, we recommend you initiate the completion of consent forms immediately so these are in place by the clinic date for each home. Please visit The Ministry of Health [COVID-19 Vaccine-Relevant Information and Planning Resources](#) page to obtain a copy of the COVID-19 Vaccine Screening and Consent Form, to be completed with the assistance of a health care provider. This page also includes a document to assist in obtaining consent: [Pre-Screening Assessment](#).

## IT Readiness and Data Collection

In partnership with your local PHU, RHs should ensure that IT protocols are in place that define and confirm staff roles and responsibilities in data collection and reporting as well as ensuring that staff are appropriately trained in their assigned roles before your on-site clinic date. Training will be provided on data entry in the COVax-ON Vaccine Management System by the Ministry of Health. This tool is critical to enable a single, complete source of information and will make intake and process flow for clinics as efficient as possible.

## Vaccine Administration

We would like to note that with recent regulatory amendments to the [Regulated Health Professions Act \(RHPA\)](#), nurses (both Registered Nurses and Registered Practical Nurses), pharmacists, pharmacy technicians, registered pharmacy students and pharmacy interns can also now administer a COVID-19 vaccine.

## Media Protocol

To prioritize the safety and health of residents, please do not plan on-site media events. Please establish communication plans for media protocols and escalation protocols, as well as other contingency planning, as needed, with your local PHU.

## Vaccine Uptake

Recently we shared some tips and strategies to help promote vaccine uptake and we are looking ahead to when we have more supply by working with partners to offer webinars for staff to address vaccine-related concerns. Please continue to share your best practices and areas where you think the ministry can further support vaccine uptake and vaccine confidence.

Please work with your local PHU on the planning and questions you have about the vaccine clinics in your homes. If you have questions about the above information, please reach out to Marsha Pinto, Acting Director, Retirement Homes Regulatory and Oversight Branch at [marsha.pinto@ontario.ca](mailto:marsha.pinto@ontario.ca)

I look forward to continuing to work with you in partnership and guided by a shared commitment to do everything we can to keep our most vulnerable Ontarians safe during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sincerely,

***Original signed by***

Denise Allyson Cole  
Deputy Minister  
Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility

Attachment: Assessment Checklist

c: Jaqueline Cureton, Assistant Deputy Minister, Seniors and Accessibility Policy, Programs and Strategic Partnerships Division, MSAA  
Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health  
Dr. Barbara Yaffe, Associate Chief Medical Officer of Health  
Alison Blair, Associate Deputy Minister, Pandemic Response and Recovery, MOH  
Michael Hillmer, Assistant Deputy Minister, Capacity Planning and Analytics, MOH/MLTC  
Lisa Levin, Chief Executive Officer, AdvantAge Ontario  
Jay O'Neill, Chief Executive Officer and Registrar, Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority  
Cathy Hecimovich, Chief Executive Officer, Ontario Retirement Communities Association  
Monika Turner, Association of Municipalities of Ontario  
Michael Jacek, Association of Municipalities of Ontario  
Colleen Geiger, President and CEO (Acting), Public Health Ontario