

**Ministry for Seniors
and Accessibility**

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January 12, 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**

COVID-19 vaccines will soon be available to more residents, staff and essential caregivers in retirement homes across the province. As more vaccines are made available, regions will continue to prioritize homes for immunization based on risk. As such, you may be invited by your local Public Health Unit or regional representatives to have all residents, essential caregivers, and remaining staff vaccinated over the next month.

We will need your help to encourage all retirement home staff, residents and their essential caregivers to roll up their sleeves and get vaccinated. Vaccination is the safest, most effective and reliable way to protect retirement homes from COVID-19.

As the province awaits future shipments from the federal government, we continue to deliver Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine at our 19 active hospital sites and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines on-site at long-term care homes and high-risk retirement homes. The Province will soon release protocols to safely and efficiently transfer the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine to further facilitate on-site vaccine clinics.

To help stop the spread of the virus and keep everyone safe, the COVID-19 vaccination program will target residents, staff, essential caregivers and support workers who have regular interaction with residents. While staff and essential caregivers will be offered the vaccines as part of in-home clinics, you are encouraged to continue registering staff for hospital clinics to maximize all available vaccines' speed and impact.

Successful implementation of the vaccination program will be dependent on the readiness of homes. Your local Public Health Unit or regional representatives will contact you with specific details to support effective execution. For further support, the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Long-Term Care have developed an assessment checklist (Attachment 1) to provide guidance and help you plan and prepare.

As a part of that planning, the following steps should also be taken:

- **Consent Forms:** A critical component of the vaccination program is obtaining consent from residents or, if applicable, their Substitute Decision Makers. Consent must be secured for vaccinations to be given. As such, it is essential that retirement home operators start as soon as possible in securing completed consent forms from those wishing to be vaccinated. It is also important to record who declined vaccination. For your use, I have attached the COVID-19 Vaccine Screening and Consent Form (Attachment 2).
- **IT Readiness:** In partnership with your local Public Health Unit, ensure there are IT protocols in place that define and confirm staff roles and responsibilities in data collection and reporting. As well, ensure staff are appropriately trained in their assigned roles within the on-site vaccination clinics. If staff are identified for IT responsibility by your local Public Health Unit, complete the COVax Users Template for Retirement Homes (Attachment 3).
- **Identification of Participants for Vaccination:** Work with staff, essential caregivers, residents, their substitute decision makers and family members to identify participants for immunization and complete the Vaccine Participants Template for Retirement Homes (Attachment 4) for all participants. This template will be required for upload into the IT system to track vaccinations during on-site clinics.
- **Information Sharing:** Provide staff, residents, their essential caregivers and family members with the information they need to make an informed choice about vaccinations. For your use, I have attached the COVID-19 Vaccines for Ontario Fact Sheet (Attachment 5). You may also wish to review the [COVID-19 Vaccine-Relevant Information and Planning Resources](#) developed by the Ministry of Health.
- **Communications Protocol:** To prioritize residents' safety and health, media events on-site at retirement homes should not be planned. Establish communication plans for media protocols and escalation protocols, as well as other contingency planning, as needed, with your local Public Health Unit.

I want to thank you for your continued commitment and partnership in getting our most vulnerable people and those who care for them safely vaccinated as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Original signed by

Denise Allyson Cole

c: Jacqueline Cureton, Assistant Deputy Minister, Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility
Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health
Dr. Barbara Yaffe, Associate Chief Medical Officer of Health
Dr. Eileen deVilla, Medical Officer of Health, City of Toronto
Dr. Wajid Ahmed, Medical Officer of Health, Windsor-Essex County Health Unit
Dr. Lawrence Loh, Medical Officer of Health, Region of Peel
Dr. Karim Kurji, Medical Officer of Health, York Region
Jay O'Neill, Chief Executive Officer and Registrar, Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority
Cathy Hecimovich, Chief Executive Officer, Ontario Retirement Communities Association
Lisa Levin, Chief Executive Officer, AdvantAge Ontario

Attachment 1: Initial COVID-19 Immunization Readiness Checklist to Support Preparations for Moderna Pilots in Long-Term Care and Retirement Homes
Attachment 2: COVID-19 Vaccine Screening and Consent Form
Attachment 3: COVax Users Template for Retirement Homes
Attachment 4: Vaccine Participants Template for Retirement Homes
Attachment 5: COVID-19 Vaccines for Ontario Fact Sheet