

December 9, 2025

MEMO TO: Retirement Home Licensees
FROM: Michèle Sanborn, Assistant Deputy Minister
Policy, Programs and Strategic Partnerships Division
Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility

SUBJECT: Holiday 2025 Reminders for the Licensed Retirement Home Sector

As the holiday season approaches, this is a friendly reminder for licensees about the recommended actions to help ensure a safe and joyful time for licensed retirement home staff, residents, and their families. Respiratory virus infections, including COVID-19, Influenza, and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), are expected to rise over the holiday season. To help safeguard residents and staff and to minimize the risk of outbreaks, we encourage licensees to consider the following measures.

Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC)

With residents attending more social gatherings and homes receiving more visitors, licensees are encouraged to continue to take proactive steps to reinforce IPAC measures. This includes utilizing foundational practices such as [hand hygiene](#), [respiratory etiquette](#), appropriate use of personal protective equipment (PPE) including [how to put on and take off PPE](#), and frequent cleaning and disinfection of common areas. Licensees must ensure that waterless, alcohol-based hand sanitizer or another form of sanitation that provides equivalent protection against infectious disease transmission is available in communal areas, as required in O. Reg. 166/11 under the *Retirement Home Act, 2010* (RHA).

As outlined in [MSAA's COVID-19 Guidance](#), retirement homes as defined in the RHA must display passive screening signage outside the home (e.g., signage at entrances) reminding individuals not to enter if symptomatic. While masks are not mandatory when a home is not in outbreak, they are still recommended for visitors who are not healthcare workers.

To further support IPAC efforts during the holiday season, licensees are encouraged to share regular updates with residents, their families, and visitors, and remind anyone feeling unwell to stay home. Licensees may reference the Public Health Ontario's [fact sheet for visitors](#).

Licensees are also encouraged to revisit MSAA's 2025 [Fall Preparedness Memo](#) and [webinar](#), which outline a range of resources to help homes prepare and respond to respiratory virus activity during the holiday season.

Licensed retirement home staff seeking additional guidance with implementing IPAC best practices should contact their [local public health unit](#) or their IPAC Hub. For assistance in locating your local IPAC Hub, please email IPACHubs@ontario.ca.

Vaccination and Antiviral Treatment

Staying up to date with vaccines remains one of the most effective ways to reduce the risk of severe respiratory illness. In addition to the regulatory requirement to promote the [influenza](#) vaccine under the RHA, sharing information about the [COVID-19](#) and [RSV](#) vaccines can help ensure residents are protected. Licensees are highly encouraged to review the memo released to the retirement home sector on December 2 from [Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health encouraging influenza vaccination](#).

Additionally, licensees are strongly encouraged to inform residents on how to access testing and antiviral treatments from their health care provider as appropriate, including [Paxlovid and Remdesivir](#) (for COVID-19) and [Oseltamivir and Zanamivir](#) (for Influenza), as per the links above.

Personal Protective Equipment

Maintaining an adequate supply of PPE and routinely checking expiry dates is highly recommended. To support inventory planning and tracking, licensees may choose to use the PPE [Burn Rate Calculator](#).

Emergency Preparedness

Licensees are encouraged to review and update, if required, their emergency preparedness plans to ensure readiness for potential weather-related disruptions. This is a good time to confirm that essential supplies, such as food, water, medications, and backup power sources, are stocked and accessible to support residents and staff during extreme winter conditions. Licensees may also wish to revisit contingency staffing plans to help maintain adequate coverage during possible outbreaks, emergencies, and the busy holiday season.

Thank you for your continued efforts in supporting the smooth operation of licensed retirement homes in Ontario and prioritizing the safety and well-being of residents and staff this holiday season.

If you have any questions, please contact the Retirement Homes Branch at RHinquiries@ontario.ca.

Sincerely,

Original signed by

Michèle Sanborn

- c: Peter Kaftarian, Deputy Minister, MSAA and MLTC
- Marsha Pinto, Director, Retirement Homes Branch, MSAA
- Dr. Daniel Warshafsky, Associate Chief Medical Officer of Health, OCMOH
- Lucy Becker, Interim 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