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## NEWS RELEASE

# Ontario Taking Additional Steps to Protect Long-Term Care Home Residents

Mandatory vaccines for all long-term care home staff  
the latest tool to protect against outbreaks

**October 01, 2021**

[Ministry of Long-Term Care](#)

TORONTO — As part of the government's plan to protect long-term care residents and staff during the Delta-driven fourth wave, Ontario is taking further action with an additional suite of tools. This includes making COVID-19 vaccinations mandatory for all in-home staff, support workers, students, and volunteers by November 15, 2021, unless a staff member has a valid medical exemption, as well as expanded inspections of homes and redirecting provincial resources to enhance and audit existing testing in homes.

"We know that long-term care residents have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. As new variants continue to spread, we are seeing a growing number of outbreaks in long-term care homes where the risk to those most vulnerable remains high," said Rod Phillips, Minister of Long-Term Care. "This enhanced suite of measures, including mandatory vaccinations for those working in the homes of long-term care residents, is one more way we will provide them the greatest level of protection possible."

Vaccination rates of staff in many homes are not high enough in the face of the risk posed by the Delta variant, and this is putting vulnerable residents at risk. To ensure the health and safety of staff and residents, mandating vaccination for in-home staff has now become essential, and homes are now required to meet the following requirements:

- Staff, support workers, students, and volunteers will have until November 15, 2021 to show proof that they have received all required doses of a COVID-19 vaccine, or to show proof of a valid

medical exemption.

- Staff who do not have all required doses or a valid medical exemption by the deadline will not be able to enter a long-term care home to work.
- Newly hired staff will be required to be fully vaccinated before they begin working in a home unless they have a valid medical exemption.
- Homes will begin randomly testing fully vaccinated individuals, including staff, caregivers and visitors, to help detect possible breakthrough cases of COVID-19 as early as possible.

In addition to adding randomized testing of vaccinated individuals, homes will continue to regularly test individuals who are not fully vaccinated. The ministry will leverage provincial testing resources to inspect and audit these results by sending testing teams into homes to validate the results that homes have been reporting to the province. The ministry will also step up rigorous inspections of homes' infection, prevention and control measures.

These new measures are the latest tools among a suite of actions the Ministry of Long-Term Care has taken to protect residents in long-term care, including:

- rigorous inspections to reinforce infection prevention and control
- regularly testing all individuals who are not fully vaccinated
- providing a COVID-19 vaccine promotion toolkit available in 12 languages
- organizing mobile clinics at homes with lower vaccination rates and homes experiencing outbreaks
- providing homes with support so they can administer vaccines themselves in a timely manner
- working to increase the hours of direct care for residents to an average of four hours per day by 2024-25
- collecting more accurate vaccination data at the home level
- offering third doses to long-term care residents. As of September 30, 64 per cent of residents have already received their third dose.

Fully vaccinated staff will continue to be able to work in more than one long-term care home, retirement home or other health service provider setting.

Homes will continue to be required to track and report on the implementation of their policies, including overall staff immunization rates. To promote transparency, the Ministry of Long-Term Care is publicly posting [long-term care home staff vaccination rates](#). To protect staff privacy, individual immunization status is not shared with the province.

## Quick Facts

- As of August 31, 2021, about 44 per cent of long-term care homes had staff vaccination rates below 90 per cent.
- Ontario has already undertaken several steps to promote

immunization rates in long-term care home staff, including an education first, voluntary approach to immunization policies, a publicly available, free [COVID-19 Vaccine Promotion Toolkit](#), and provisions that allow staff to use paid sick leave to get vaccinated or recover from symptoms resulting from vaccination.

- Third doses are now being offered to long-term care home residents to boost the primary series of COVID-19 vaccinations. As of September 30, 2021, 64 per cent of residents have received a third dose.
- According to home-level data collected by the Ministry of Long-term Care, about 90 per cent of staff have received at least their first dose provincially, however there is variation among homes.
- As part of the fall pandemic preparedness plan, the government is providing \$4.5 million to extend the use of the Specialized Care Centre located at the Toronto Congress Centre from December 31, 2021 until March 31, 2022. This will extend the availability of an innovative and modern solution to surge capacity for both long-term care residents and hospital patients across the Greater Toronto Area should the need arise.
- The government has provided prevention and containment funding so homes can hire temporary staff if they need to and deployed Secure Mobile Enhancement and Support Teams to work with homes facing critical staffing shortages until they are able to hire new or temporary staff.
- All Ontarians, including all staff, visitors, and residents in long-term care homes, must continue to practice public health measures including screening at entry, masking, physical distancing, hand hygiene, and staying at home when they are sick. While COVID-19 immunizations have been demonstrated to be very effective, it is important for Ontarians to not let their guard down in the ongoing fight against the pandemic, in particular with the Delta variant.

## Additional Resources

Visit Ontario's [website](#) to learn more about how the province continues to protect Ontarians from COVID-19.

[Emergency information and orders](#)

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