

## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS:

# COVID-19 Requirements for Licensed Supportive Living, Long-Term Care and Hospice Settings

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### General

#### Are these settings safe to live in, work at, and visit?

- Yes, given the ongoing public health measures that remain in place, these settings continue to be safe to live in, work at, and visit.
- While there continues to be a risk of exposure to and transmission of COVID-19, a number of safety precautions continue to be in place to ensure continued protection for vulnerable populations.
  - These safety measures include continuous masking for visitors and staff (even in resident rooms), enhanced cleaning and disinfection, health screening upon entry, testing guidelines, isolation/quarantine when required, and management of outbreaks to prevent further spread.

#### What facilities does this order apply to?

- All licensed supportive living (including group homes, lodges and designated supportive living), long-term care (nursing homes and auxiliary hospitals), and hospice settings.
- If a site contains both licensed supportive living spaces and unlicensed spaces, Orders do not apply to the unlicensed areas of the site.
  - Operators, and others, can determine whether a site is a licensed supportive living accommodation (according to the [Supportive Living Accommodation Licensing Act](#)), or is a long-term care site, by visiting Alberta Health's [public reporting site](#).
- If you have specific questions about how orders apply in your site (e.g. active screening, shared spaces, etc.), please reach out directly to [asal@gov.ab.ca](mailto:asal@gov.ab.ca) or (780)644-8428 to discuss.

#### Is there a provincial restriction prohibiting presence of non-vaccinated family and friends?

- No, however, family and friends who are not fully vaccinated are strongly encouraged to reconsider their need to attend to the resident onsite, indoors and in-person.
  - Alternatives to onsite indoor in-person visits include outdoor visits, virtual visits, telephone calls, etc.
- Operators have authority<sup>1</sup> to implement additional site-based policies and processes for COVID-19 prevention (including requiring proof of vaccine or rapid testing) as appropriate to local context and consideration of resident preferences. Once the site-based policies and processes have been developed, they will apply to all persons entering the site.
  - If you have concerns about any site-based policies, please discuss with site administration.

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<sup>1</sup> [Supportive Living Accommodation Licensing Act](#), [Nursing Homes Act](#)  
[alberta.ca/BizConnect](http://alberta.ca/BizConnect)  
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### Are masks required for in room visiting?

- As per [CMOH Order 49-2021](#), visiting persons in all settings must wear a surgical/procedure mask in all indoor areas of the building (including resident rooms).
  - Visiting persons who are spending time with residents with communication challenges (e.g. hearing concerns, etc.) where a mask would inhibit communication being provided, can remove the mask while in a private space in the building if the resident consents and a distance of two metres is maintained between the visitor and the resident at all times.

### Symptoms and Health Screening

#### What are the screening requirements for working or visiting individuals?

- Staff, Students, Service Providers, and Volunteers are to be actively screened prior to the start of each shift.
- Visiting persons are to be actively screened at entry to the site.
- Active screening involves a satisfactory COVID-19 screening using [Alberta Health Daily Checklist \(Continuing Care\)](#). This screening **must be confirmed** by the screener upon entry.
- It is absolutely critical that if any symptoms, no matter how mild and regardless of your vaccine status, are identified on health screening, then **YOU MUST NOT ENTER**.

### Testing and Isolation

#### What are the COVID-19 testing guidelines for new and existing residents?

- Temporarily, as per [CMOH Order 49-2021](#), all LTC and DSL residents must be tested within 48 hours of hospital discharge (pre or post discharge). Residents are to remain in their rooms and be placed on contact/droplet precautions until they receive a negative test result. This test can be taken either at hospital or in the facility, however hospital discharges cannot be held up for testing or awaiting test results.
  - This is required for both new admissions and returns from acute care. This includes all admissions or emergency room visits over 24 hours.
  - This is not required for residents in other licensed supportive living setting (e.g. lodges) or hospices although some operators may implement rapid testing or other measures in these settings as an additional site-based policy and process.
- Indications for testing symptomatic and asymptomatic persons are outlined in the current version of the [Alberta Public Health Disease Management Guidelines](#) and as directed by Public Health. These guidelines are updated from time to time; please ensure you are referencing the most recent version.
- Should the test result come back positive, refer to [Order 37-2021](#):
  - Appendix 1: Management of Fully Vaccinated Resident COVID-19 Test Results
  - Appendix 2: Management of Partially Vaccinated Resident COVID-19 Test Results
  - Appendix 3: Management of Non-Vaccinated Resident COVID-19 Test Results

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### What does 48 hours pre or post hospital discharge mean?

- Temporarily, as per [CMOH Order 49-2021](#), all LTC and DSL residents must be tested within 48 hours of hospital discharge (pre or post discharge).
- To clarify, the swab can be taken anytime in the period of 48 hours prior to hospital discharge or 48 hours following hospital discharge.

### How do operators manage test results?

- Please refer to [Order 37-2021](#):
  - Appendix 1: Management of Fully Vaccinated Resident COVID-19 Test Results
  - Appendix 2: Management of Partially Vaccinated Resident COVID-19 Test Results
  - Appendix 3: Management of Non-Vaccinated Resident COVID-19 Test Results

## Cleaning and Disinfecting

### What are the cleaning and disinfection requirements?

- Common/public areas are required to have high touch surfaces cleaned and disinfected twice per day.
  - Common areas are not defined by this order. It is up to each site to determine which areas of their sites are considered common based on site configuration, space, and what is safest for the residents. If you wish to further discuss what spaces in your facility are common, please reach out directly to [asal@gov.ab.ca](mailto:asal@gov.ab.ca) or (780)644-8428 to discuss.
- High touch areas include doorknobs, light switches, call bells, handrails, phones, elevator buttons, TV remotes, care/treatment areas, dining areas, lounges, etc.
- Resident rooms are not common/public areas and do not require enhanced cleaning.

### What are auditors looking for to ensure cleaning is being completed?

- Auditors are looking for evidence such as cleaning schedules, logs or flow sheets including what surface cleaning is required and evidence that it has been completed. Auditors will also be completing visual inspections of different areas of the building.
- Auditors may also have discussions with staff who are responsible for the cleaning to ensure that staff are aware of the required processes.

## Group Recreation, Activities, Singing and Shared Dining

### If the site has an outbreak, will these activities and shared dining be paused?

- In the event of an outbreak, the MOH or their designate will identify if group activities and shared dining will need to be restricted. These activities can resume as normal, unless indicated by the MOH (or designate).
- Operators will communicate any changes to residents and family/friends.

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### Miscellaneous

**I have some questions and concerns about the COVID-19 vaccines, where can I get more information?**

- The Health Canada approved vaccines are safe, effective and help prevent serious illness from COVID-19. High vaccine uptake has been proven to reduce the risk of introduction and transmission of COVID-19 in continuing care settings.
- For more information about COVID-19 vaccines contact your primary healthcare provider or see [Health Canada](#), [Alberta Health](#) and Healthcare Excellence Canada for resources about [vaccine preparedness for long-term care and retirement homes](#).

**Can residents go off site and engage in any activity they desire?**

- Yes, like all Albertans, residents are able to engage in any activity off site that they desire within the limits of any current public health orders. New measures to protect the health care system, stop the spread, and increase vaccination rates came into effect starting September 16<sup>th</sup>; operators are encouraged to be a conduit for up to date information being shared with residents to support decision making with respect to off-site activities.

**How is the mental health of residents and staff being addressed?**

- The impact of the pandemic on the mental health of residents and staff is well recognized. Clear and honest conversations are encouraged at a local level to support the individual needs of persons impacted.

**What is the role of risk assessments going forward?**

- Risk assessment process were established in July 2020 as a method of balancing the need to protect persons against COVID-19 with the need to protect quality of life. The risk tolerance assessment tool was intended to encourage involvement of residents and families in site-based assessments of risk due to facility design, health of residents, and staff preferences.
- Risk assessment processes are no longer required however operators may choose to continue using this tool in their sites.

**What is being done to address the issues that COVID-19 highlighted in DSL/LTC in Alberta?**

- The Facility Based Continuing Care review is underway in Alberta and seeks to address many of the issues that COVID-19 has brought to the forefront (e.g. impacts on mental health and quality of life for residents). In addition, there is a review of the legislative framework in Alberta which will also seek to enable broad system change for the future of the continuing care system.
- More information is available online at: <https://www.alberta.ca/facility-based-continuing-care-review.aspx>.

For more information, please visit [alberta.ca/protecting-residents-at-congregate-care-facilities](https://www.alberta.ca/protecting-residents-at-congregate-care-facilities) or contact [asal@gov.ab.ca](mailto:asal@gov.ab.ca)