

AR 201467

All Operators: Licensed Supportive Living, Long-Term Care and Hospice

**RE: Planning for the Ongoing Management of COVID-19**

Dear Staff and Operators:

As we pass the two-year mark of the pandemic, we would like to thank you once again for your efforts to care for and keep your residents, their families and your staff safe. We also want to provide you with an update on easing continuing care public health measures, future planning for living with COVID-19 and funding related to COVID-19 initiatives.

**Future Easing of Current COVID-19 Measures**

As part of the go-forward approach to managing COVID-19, we will eventually be moving away from using emergency Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH) Orders to direct the management of COVID-19. Learnings from the pandemic and recommendations in the [Facility-Based Continuing Care Review](#) identified that certain public health and safety measures should be incorporated into the normal standards of care to protect residents, staff and visitors.

A working group, including stakeholders, have reviewed all the existing standards within the CMOH Orders to identify the highest impact measures, which are recommended to be adopted as ongoing, versus those standards that will be discontinued. The approach to use of PPE (including continuous masking), COVID-19 testing, outbreak reporting, outbreak procedures and management of symptomatic persons and test results, are examples of topics that will continue within routine practice, and will be updated as needed. In the future, after the CMOH Orders are rescinded, guidance and direction for operators will be found in the applicable [Alberta Health Services Guide for Outbreak Prevention and Control](#).

Over the coming months (summer 2022), we anticipate being able to provide operators with a proposed plan for easing the CMOH Orders. At that time, we will also provide information regarding how health and safety measures will be maintained through new normal operations, which will be communicated through education sessions for operators. The education sessions are intended to share information regarding the easing plan and the future planning that is underway.

Ahead of these sessions, please give some thought as to what other supports or resources staff and operators will need to be successful over the longer-term, so we can collectively respond to these needs.

### **Future Planning for Living with COVID-19**

Continuing care residents remain among those at greatest risk of severe outcomes. COVID-19 will continue to circulate, including the likely emergence of new variants of concern, so we need to work together to be prepared for different scenarios of living with COVID-19. The pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on continuing care residents, as well as their families and staff, so moving forward, there will be an emphasis on minimizing disruptions to residents' quality of life and bolstering staff well-being.

As part of planning for living with COVID-19, we are working with key partners and stakeholders to develop a plan for the long-term management of COVID-19 within continuing care facilities. Future scenarios and contingency plans are being developed, based on a matrix of different possibilities (e.g. transmissibility and severity). The primary objective is to transition out of an emergency approach to COVID-19 to one that is more sustainable over the longer-term. Alberta Health, Alberta Health Services and a variety of stakeholders have been working to create a standard response for each future scenario.

It is important that operators, staff, residents and families feel comfortable, confident and prepared for appropriate and proportionate responses for what may come in the future. Clear, ready-to-use operational frameworks will be essential for managing various potential scenarios of COVID-19 over the longer-term. There will always be new cohorts of site-based leaders, staff and residents coming into the system, so it will be critical that infectious disease outbreak planning and simulations occur on a regular basis, and are updated and re-communicated as necessary.

In addition, as we plan for living with COVID-19, being fully immunized with all recommended doses is one of the most effective ways to protect ourselves and our communities. We have provided a letter reinforcing this messaging that is directed to your staff and kindly ask that you share a copy of that letter with them.

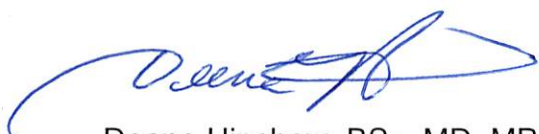
### **COVID-19 Funding Updates**

It is expected that as enhanced public health measures are eased, the specific funding for COVID-19, which has enabled the additional expectations to be met, will also be scaled back to be a component of ongoing operational needs. We will provide a notice period to operators so they can plan accordingly for any upcoming changes. It is critical that all operators are reporting to Alberta Health on their COVID-19 costs in a timely manner, per the reporting requirements, as this information is used to determine required funding.

It is possible there may be ongoing extraordinary expectations required of operators. This has yet to be determined, but we are in regular conversation with the continuing care associations and operators to understand the implications of any additional expectations.

Thank you for your continued support as we work together to ensure the overall health and well-being of staff and residents. If you have questions or comments, please contact the team at [continuingcare@gov.ab.ca](mailto:continuingcare@gov.ab.ca). We look forward to our continued collaboration.

Yours sincerely,



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Enclosure: Letter to Continuing Care Staff

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