



## HOMES AND SENIORS SERVICES

### **POLICY & PROCEDURE NUMBER: 2.10**

**DEPARTMENT:** *Infection Control*

**SUBJECT:** *Immunization – Staff COVID-19*

**APPROVAL DATE:** June 2021

**REVISION DATE:** September 2021; October 2021

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### **PURPOSE:**

The policy has been amended following its original version released June 2021.

The effective date of this policy is October 15, 2021.

The purpose of this policy is to outline Elgin County Homes expectations and requirements with regards to COVID-19 immunization of staff, student placements, support workers and volunteers.

Employers across Canada have a legal obligation under occupational health and safety legislation to provide their employees with safe workplaces and to take all reasonable precautions to protect employees from getting a work-related illness.

COVID-19 is an acute respiratory illness caused by the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). It may be characterized by fever, cough, shortness of breath, and several other symptoms. Asymptomatic infection is also possible. The risk of severe disease increases with age but is not limited to the elderly and is elevated in those with underlying medical conditions.

Achieving high immunization rates in Ontario's long-term care homes through vaccination is part of a range of measures and actions that can help prevent and limit the spread of COVID-19 in homes. Vaccination against COVID-19 helps reduce the number of new cases, and, most importantly, helps to reduce severe outcomes including hospitalizations and death due to COVID-19 in both residents and others who may be present in a long-term care home.

High rates of vaccination in our Homes is important to protect all person(s) who live, work and visit our Homes to help reduce the risk of outbreaks and the need to isolate residents. Isolation impacts residents' access to in-person social interaction, activities, and communal dining. The effects of isolation may be greater for residents who have dementia and/or cognitive impairment.

Medical experts in Canada and throughout the world have concluded, overwhelmingly, about the outstanding effectiveness of the COVID-19 vaccines in preventing serious illness and hospitalization. There is mounting evidence that vaccines reduce transmission of the virus. Recent data has indicated that the vast majority of new COVID-19 cases are those who are



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unvaccinated and/or partially vaccinated. Advice from Public Health officials in Canada as well as federal and provincial governments has been to get vaccinated. Protection of our vulnerable residents is of paramount importance and the participation in COVID-19 vaccination is strongly encouraged for our staff. Given the nature of our work with a vulnerable senior population and our responsibility to ensure a safe workplace for staff, students and volunteers, we have an obligation to ensure that we are protecting everyone in our Homes from COVID-19 infections and therefore are following Ministry of Long-Term Care Directive #3, and, implementing a **mandatory COVID-19 policy** for anyone engaging in work (staff, students, support workers and volunteers) in our Homes.

### **Mandatory Vaccination**

**Effective November 15, 2021, all staff, student placements, support workers and volunteers are required to provide proof that they have received all required doses of a COVID-19 vaccine, or proof of a valid medical contraindication. Individuals who choose not to show proof by the deadline will not be permitted to enter the Home to work, train or volunteer.**

In partnership with Southwestern Public Health, Elgin County Homes will provide support for COVID-19 vaccination to staff members as protection for residents and staff, and to ensure appropriate staffing availability for resident care.

### **APPLICATION OF THE POLICY:**

Regardless of how often they are at the long-term care home and how much time they spend there, this policy applies to:

- workers (including employees, persons on contract), and people employed by an employment agency or other third party
- students on an educational placement at the home
- volunteers
- support workers (Support workers attending the Home for emergency or palliative situations, to provide timely medical care or for the purposes of making a delivery are not required to provide proof of vaccination prior to entering the Home)
- any corporate internal support department staff (e.g. Human Resources, IT, etc.) working in or providing services to the Long-Term Care Homes.



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For the purposes of this Policy, an individual is considered fully immunized against COVID-19 if they have received:

- the full series of a COVID-19 vaccine authorized by Health Canada, or any combination of such vaccines,
- one or two doses of a COVID-19 mRNA vaccine not authorized by Health Canada, followed by one dose of a COVID-19 mRNA vaccine authorized by Health Canada, or
- three doses of a COVID-19 vaccine not authorized by Health Canada, and
- they received their final dose of the COVID-19 vaccine at least 14 days before providing the proof of being fully vaccinated

Please be advised that the definition of fully vaccinated will be amended to include the requirement for additional doses or booster shots as recommended and approved by Health Canada.

Notwithstanding that an individual is fully vaccinated, they are still required to adhere to applicable testing and personal protective equipment, or other such requirements mandated by ministry, public health authorities and/or County of Elgin Homes.

If, and when, new or amended government directives are issued or alternatives to vaccinations are developed and then approved for use by Health Canada as being effective to protect individuals against COVID-19 (e.g. oral antiviral medications, etc.) this policy shall be reviewed and revised/updated as appropriate.

### **PROCEDURE:**

#### Mandatory COVID-19 Immunization Requirements – Existing Staff, Students, Support Workers and Volunteers

- It is important that all person(s) have the required information/education to make an informed decision about whether to receive a COVID-19 vaccine. In order to ensure that all person(s) subject to this policy are adequately educated about this policy, COVID-19 and the COVID-19 vaccine(s), educational materials/resources will be available and promoted within the Homes.



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- All staff, students, support workers and volunteers are required to be fully vaccinated (subject only to legitimate established exemptions of a medical nature).
- **Effective November 15, 2021, all staff, student placements, support workers and volunteers are required to provide proof that they have received all required doses of a COVID-19 vaccine, or proof of a valid medical contraindication.**
- All employees are required to complete vaccination and submit acceptable written proof of being fully vaccinated to the Manager of Resident Care. The Manager of Resident Care will update the Vaccination Status portal for all Home staff and forward any medical exemption requests (that include the effective time period for the medical exemption) to Human Resources.
- **The first dose of vaccine is required by October 17, 2021 with the second dose being completed by November 15, 2021.**
- Notwithstanding that an employee is fully vaccinated, they are still required to adhere to applicable testing and personal protective equipment requirements mandated by Public Health, MLTC Directive #3 and in accordance with County of Elgin Homes policy.
- Where an existing staff member, student, support worker or volunteer cannot be vaccinated due to a legitimate established medical reason (as approved by the Human Resources department), County of Elgin Human Resources department and Homes management will work with the individual to accommodate pursuant to the organizational accommodation policy and procedure.  
To best meet the health and safety requirements of the individual, the exempt individual will be required to:
  - Wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) – including, but not limited to, mask and face shield/protective eyewear even after such precautions are no longer mandated by applicable public health authorities; and,
  - Submit to daily (every shift) rapid antigen COVID-19 testing, even after such precautions are no longer mandated by applicable public health authorities
  - These precautions will be required until the employee provides evidence to the Manager of Resident Care that they are fully vaccinated.



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- In accordance with Elgin County Homes and Human Resources policies, collective agreements and applicable legislation and directives, failure to meet the above mandated requirements by November 15, 2021 shall result in staff, student, volunteer access to the Home being removed and, staff to be placed on an unpaid leave, until such time as the mandated requirements are met.
- Additionally, exempt persons who fail to adhere and/or comply with any of the measures outlined above will be placed on unpaid leave until they comply.
- The Home will reimburse the staff member for such expense incurred in obtaining and providing written proof of medical exemption by a physician and/or Registered Nurse in extended class. If the effective time period of a medical reason provided has expired, Elgin County Homes management shall ensure, within 10 days of the medical reason expiring, that the individual provides proof of vaccination.
- For individuals who have received the first dose of a two-dose COVID-19 vaccination series and have provided proof to Elgin County Homes, they shall:
  - Agree in writing that they will receive their second dose by a mutually agreed upon date and, provide proof of administration of the second dose by November 15, 2021,
  - Wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) – mask and face shield/protective eyewear even after such precautions are no longer mandated by applicable public health authorities; and,
  - Submit to daily (every shift) rapid antigen COVID-19 testing, even after such precautions are no longer mandated by applicable public health authorities
  - Be required to wear the above PPE and submit to daily (every shift) rapid testing until such time as they provide evidence of full vaccination (within the agreed upon timeline)
- The Educational program is mandatory for all staff, students and volunteers that provide written proof of approved medical exemption for COVID-19 vaccination. The educational program will be available to all persons to support informed decision making related to COVID-19 vaccination and will include the following:



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- a. How COVID-19 vaccines work
  - b. Vaccine safety related to the development of the COVID-19 vaccines
  - c. The benefits of vaccination against COVID-19
  - d. Risks of not being vaccinated against COVID-19
  - e. Possible side effects of COVID-19 vaccination
- While we will respect staff, students, support workers and volunteer's decision about vaccination, we strongly encourage all person(s) working in, or otherwise attending, our Homes to help protect everyone by getting vaccinated.
  - Elgin County Homes are committed to supporting access to vaccination. As such, on-site COVID-19 vaccination clinic(s), where sanctioned by the Homes Medical Director and/or Southwestern Public Health (Medical Officer of Health) through a signed medical directive, will be provided for staff members who have provided informed consent.
  - The nurse giving the injections may administer the COVID-19 vaccine to eligible County of Elgin staff members according to the applicable manufacturer's instructions after performing a health assessment, reviewing contraindications and receiving informed consent. Adrenaline 1:1000 IU 1 ml will be available on the injection tray in case of adverse reaction. Registered staff to understand and be able to apply the medical directive for dosage of Adrenaline prior to vaccination.
  - A list of immunized staff will be compiled in each Home by the Manager of Resident Care.
  - Staff members who receive their vaccine at the Home will be recorded on the list of immunized staff members in each Home. A record of immunization will be provided by the Home.

### Mandatory Vaccination – New Hires, Student Placements, Support Workers and Volunteers

- New student placements, volunteers, support workers and staff members hired after July 1, 2021, will, prior to commencement of placement/work, be required to provide proof of full COVID-19 vaccine administration, or provide written proof of a valid medical



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reason, provided by either a physician or registered nurse in the extended class, that sets out:

- a. that the person cannot be vaccinated against COVID-19; and
- b. the effective time period for the medical reason; and they
- c. Must comply with all PPE and rapid antigen testing requirements as outlined above

### **COMPLIANCE**

1. Employees who refuse to adhere and/or comply with any of the measures outlined above will be excluded from work without pay until they are able to fulfill the requirements of this policy.

2. New hires, students, support workers, volunteers, independent operators and individuals employed by an employment agency or third-party provider who refuse to adhere and/or comply with any of the measures outlined above will be denied further access to the Home and as applicable their placement will cease.

- This policy shall be communicated to all existing staff (including, but not limited to, Surge learning), student placements, support workers, and volunteers, and a copy of the policy shall be made available to residents and families.
- Elgin County Homes shall comply with all statistical information collection and disclose in aggregate form (without any identifying information) to Ministry of Long-Term Care as set out by the ministry.

### *References/Resources:*

- MLTC Minister's Directive: Long- Term Care Home COVID-19 Immunization Policy, October 1, 2021
- MLTC Resource Guide Minister's Directive: Long- Term Care Home COVID-19 Immunization Policy Version 6, October 1, 2021

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- Directive #3, COVID-19 Guidance Document for LTCHs, and Rapid Testing Merged FAQs, September 28, 2021
- About COVID-19 Vaccines (Ontario Ministry of Health)
- COVID-19 Vaccine Information Sheet (Ontario Ministry of Health)
- **\*\*bilingual\*\*** Building Confidence in Vaccines [English] and Accroître la confiance à l'égard des vaccins [French] (Public Health Ontario)
- Communicating effectively about immunization: Canadian Immunization Guide (Government of Canada)
- **\*\*multilingual\*\*** Coronavirus disease (COVID-19): Awareness resources (Government of Canada)
- COVID-19 Info (Immunize Canada)
- **\*\*bilingual\*\*** COVID-19 vaccines and workplace health and safety: Learn how COVID-19 vaccines help protect you and make your workplace safer [English] and Les vaccins contre la COVID-19 et la santé et la sécurité au travail: Découvrez comment les vaccins contre la COVID-19 contribuent à vous protéger et à rendre votre lieu de travail plus sécuritaire [French] (Ontario Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development)
- COVID-19: Vaccines | Centre for Effective Practice - Digital Tools (Centre for Effective Practice)
- COVID-19 Vaccines Explained (World Health Organization)
- **\*\*multilingual\*\*** COVID-19: Vaccine Resources and in American Sign Language (City of Toronto)
- **\*\*multilingual\*\*** Documents multilingues sur la vaccination contre la COVID-19 (Alliance des communautés culturelles pour l'égalité dans la santé et les services sociaux)
- Gashkiwidoon toolkit: covid-19 vaccine implementation (Indigenous Primary Health Care Council)
- **\*\*multilingual\*\*** LTC COVID-19 Vaccine Promotion Toolkit (Ministry of Long-Term Care)
- Ontario's doctors answer COVID-19 vaccine questions (Ontario Medical Association)
- Tools to Boost Vaccine Confidence in LTC Teams (Ontario Centres for Learning, Research and Innovation in Long-Term Care)
- Updates on COVID-19 (National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health)