

June 3, 2020

Seniors' Month, Increased COVID-19 Testing, Resident Co-payment Freeze, Visitation and Ombudsman Update

Dear residents and long-term care team members,

Happy Seniors' Month. While many people under the age of 65 call their long-term care (LTC) home, "home" most of the people who make up our resident population in LTC homes across Ontario are seniors. To this group of people, we extend our thanks and appreciation! This has been a VERY challenging chapter in your lives, one that may parallel in intensity with the Great Depression and WWII. The COVID-19 pandemic will go down in history as one of the most powerful societal crises, one that has shone a bright light into LTC, and for that I am thankful. We will not return to life and work in LTC as it was pre-COVID-19. May the sacrifices you have made in your life the past 3 months pave the way for insight that produces LASTING positive change. Thank you for your courage, your patience and for your transparency in communicating what is working well and what needs to be changed.

So, we celebrate Seniors' Month with you! Please share with us, what you and your team members, co-residents and families are doing to celebrate. The COVID-19 restrictions make it difficult to celebrate, but not impossible, so please share!

The Ontario Government says this about Seniors' Month (found on [ontario.ca](https://www.ontario.ca)):

Seniors' Month

June is Seniors' month in Ontario. This year's theme is **stay safe, stay in touch**.

It is a time when we recognize the contributions that older adults have made in communities across our province.

Given current circumstances, we are focusing on engaging and bringing together seniors virtually, rather than in person.

This June, we encourage communities across Ontario to demonstrate safe and innovative ways to celebrate the positive impact that older adults have on our lives.



Continued COVID-19 Testing in LTC:

Government announced on that all LTC home team members must continue to be tested at reasonable intervals, at a minimum of twice in June. That is good news in terms of being equipped with accurate information to prevent the spread of the virus in your LTC homes. While your team members are undoubtedly taking every precaution to limit their exposure to COVID-19 when not at work, the risk is real, so having regular testing for them is good news. This type of testing, called “surveillance testing”, is required for all team members in your home (front line workers, management, food-service workers, contracted service providers, etc.).

[Click here](#) to view the entire document.

[Click here](#) to access responses to Frequently Asked Questions regarding long-term care home procedures and protocols related to testing LTC staff. (Posted June 4, 2020, MOLTC)

LTC Resident Co-payment Freeze:

The cost to live in your LTC home that is paid by you is called a co-payment. If there is an increase to the co-payment, this time of year is when government makes that announcement. On June 1, government released notice that the co-payment is frozen at this time i.e. there will be no increase for 6 months. The increase will now be in effect as of January 1, 2021, notice of which will be made in early December because 30 days notice is required.

Psychosocial and Emotional Wellbeing: Visiting with People You Love:

I want to share with you that conversations are continuing between OARC and government to advise on a plan to reintroduce visiting in LTC homes. COVID-19 is not going away any time soon, and residents and families/friends have been separated for a very long time. We know the impact of this isolation and we understand the anticipated harm to psychosocial and emotional wellbeing if a plan is not developed and implemented as soon as possible. Know this – a plan IS BEING DEVELOPED and OARC is actively engaged with government throughout the stages of consultation and planning. We all look forward to having a safe, cautious and measured road map that leads us to the goal we all share - reuniting residents and their families. Thank you for your patience, courage and understanding in these very challenging times. Your safety comes first.

Ombudsman Offices and LTC Investigations:

There are two Ombudsman entities in Ontario; the Ontario Ombudsman and the Patient Ombudsman. The Ontario Ombudsman is an independent office of Legislature and has oversight over ministries including the Ministry of Health, Ministry of LTC, universities, colleges, and public services. This office receives complaints and launches investigations when necessary. If a systemic issue is identified, the ensuing investigation is at the systemic level.

The Patient Ombudsman is not an independent office of the Legislature, reports to the Ministry of Health and has oversight over hospitals, long-term care homes and LHIN (Local Health Integration Networks) Home Care Services. This office receives complaints and launches investigations when deemed necessary.

On June 1st, both of these Ombudsman offices announced that they are launching immediate investigations into long-term care.

The Ontario Ombudsman's investigation will look into the actions of the Ministry of Health and Ministry of LTC during the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, the focus will be on what the Ministries did/did not do during the crisis to keep residents, families and team members safe. This level of investigation is at the bureaucratic level and may involve topics including funding and adoption of recommendations made through past inquiries. [Click here](#) to view the entire announcement.

The Patient Ombudsman's investigation will take a more 'grass roots' look into the experiences of residents and caregivers/family members during the crisis of COVID-19, based on over 150 complaints received. Some of the issues being investigated are:

- visitation restrictions
- infection prevention and control procedures
- staffing levels
- communication of information

To view the Patient Ombudsman's announcement, click here:

<http://www.ontarc.com/documents/misc/20200602PatientOmbudsmanlthc-investigation-final.pdf>

The two Ombudsman offices will communicate together when deemed necessary, effective and efficient. The recommendations made by the Ontario Ombudsman are intended to address systemic, bureaucratic level deficiencies, while the recommendations made by the Patient Ombudsman will be directed towards long-term care licensees, Administrators, management teams addressing home level changes and general aspects of care.

Upcoming OARC Information Sessions

June 9, 2020 | 2 to 3 pm EDT - **Exploring the Impact of Mealtimes in LTC During an Outbreak**

Join guest speaker Heather Keller RD PhD, the Schlegel Research Chair in Nutrition and Aging at the University of Waterloo, as she provides an overview on the importance of mealtimes and discusses changes in routines and opportunities for social engagement as a result of an outbreak. The webinar will focus on peer-sharing and supportive suggestions to make the most of mealtimes, even during outbreak status.

This session is full - contact Jennifer Langston if you wish to be added to the waitlist jlangston@ontarc.com 1-800-532-0201 x 220

June 10, 2020 | 2 to 3 pm EDT - **Ontario Long-Term Care Inspection Program During COVID-19**

Brian Pollard, Assistant Deputy Minister, Long-Term Care Operations Division, Ministry of Long-Term Care and Stacey Colameco, Director, Long-Term Care Inspections Branch, Ministry of Long-Term Care, will lead this informative webinar designed to review the LTC Inspection Program During COVID-19; the role of Inspectors; and, Ministry expectations and suggestions for Residents' Councils related to COVID-19

This session is full - contact Jennifer Langston if you wish to be added to the waitlist jlangston@ontarc.com 1-800-532-0201 x 220

June 18, 2020 | 2:30 to 4:00 pm EDT - **Caring for Long-Term Care Residents, a Message of Hope from our Government**

Residents across Ontario are invited to join OARC as we host government leaders for relevant messaging on living through the current challenges and looking forward with hope to the future of living and working in long-term care. Invited Guest Speakers: The Honorable Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario; Christine Elliot, Minister of Health; Dr. Merrilee Fullerton, Minister of Long-Term Care; Janet Hope, Assistant Deputy Minister, Long Term Care Policy Division; Brian Pollard, Assistant Deputy Minister, Long Term Care Operations Division

Register here: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/6319156515345783310>

June 25, 2020 | 2 to 3 pm EDT - **Supporting Residents with Cognitive Changes During COVID-19**

Guest Speaker: Dr. Allen Power, Schlegel Chair in Aging and Dementia Innovation at the Schlegel—University of Waterloo Research Institute for Aging How can we help our neighbors--and ourselves--keep as safe as possible, while supporting everyone’s rights and quality of life? There are no easy answers, but Dr. Al Power will share some ideas for how to balance these sometimes-conflicting ideals and will solicit ideas and questions from participants as well.

Register here: <https://attendee.gototraining.com/r/943192267693701890>

OARC will continue each day to work towards communicating the LTC resident experience to stakeholders, government and community. We are engaged in social change and acknowledge the privilege in doing so, on your behalf. We wish you health and happiness as we continue to navigate these new days together.

Sincerely,



Dee Lender
Executive Director