

April 8, 2021

Path to Recovery and Formation of National Standards to Improve Quality, Safety and Infection Control

Dear Residents and LTC Team Members,

I'm writing to you today, with a heightened sense of optimism and ever steady hopefulness. As our province continues to experience unprecedented community spread of COVID-19 and the variants (wave 3), with looming heightened restrictions, our long-term care (LTC) sector is doing well. At least, there is very little COVID-19 infection. However, to say that LTC is doing well, is somewhat misplaced.

The impact of prolonged isolation, severe restrictions and loss of mobility, choice and freedom has been immense. Now, most residents, team members and essential caregivers have been vaccinated. As vaccinations have been offered and received in LTC, OARC has been asking government for an easing of the restrictions to bring some freedom of movement, visiting and social engagement among residents and the people they care about. The recent memo, released from Erin Hannah, Associate Deputy Minister of LTC Pandemic Response, outlines some changes that will add to residents' quality of living.

[The memo, titled "Path to Recovery" outlines important information in 4 areas:](#)

1) Vaccination:

All residents who were able to receive (or who wanted) a vaccination have received one, and over 90% of residents are fully immunized with two doses. The Ministry of LTC estimates that almost 80% of team/staff members and 91% of caregivers have received vaccinations, although there is wide variety amongst homes in the vaccination rate for team/staff members.

Every team/staff member is a leader. Together, with the management of each LTC home, we have been encouraged by government to spread the word about the efficacy and safety of the vaccine. The only way to move through this pandemic to the end result of resumption of normalcy and true quality of living is through massive uptake of the vaccine. Homes are encouraged to teach about and support increased uptake amongst team members through intimate conversation, sharing of educational literature and supportive education. The Ministry of Long-Term Care

has prepared a ‘toolkit’ of information available in 12 languages to support these efforts.

2) Outbreak Definition:

To this point, a LTC home would be declared in ‘outbreak’ if just ONE person (resident, family member, team/staff member) had a positive test result. The new definition, effective April 7, states that outbreak of a LTC home is TWO or more lab-confirmed cases (resident, staff/team, and/or visitor) in a home, within a 14-day period. The intended outcome of this new definition is that residents will experience some relief and experience a better quality of living because their home will not be shut down because of one case of COVID-19.

3) Supporting Resident Wellness:

Because LTC homes are highly vaccinated settings, homes are now instructed to “maximize opportunities for residents and families to engage in activities that bring them joy, comfort and dignity- that give residents back the sense of choice in their own homes and lives.” What does this mean?

- All homes are asked to review and update policies immediately to reflect safe opportunities to:

- Ensure residents can go outdoors
- Create opportunities for caregivers to be with residents outside of the resident’s room
- Resume small group social activities

ATTENTION RESIDENTS’ COUNCILS! This is excellent news for your Residents’ Council efforts!! Speak with your team members and fellow residents about new, refreshed ways to engage in Council conversations and initiatives. You’ve been challenged for months without the ability to meet in small social groups. Now you can resume these meetings! Let OARC know how you’re doing.

4) Furthering the Path to Recovery

OARC is one of over 30 partners assembled as part of the LTC Response and Recovery Advisory Committee. This group was announced on March 23. We are meeting every Wednesday morning! In addition to this main group that meets weekly, there are 8 ‘task teams’ that will assemble and meet for 4-6 weeks tackling topics essential to the recovery process and stabilization of LTC in Ontario. OARC will participate in 6 of the 8 teams. The task team topics include Isolation, Communications, Staffing, Infection Protection and Control, Visitor and Caregiver policy, LTC Leadership and Development Training, Emergency Preparedness, and Medical Leadership. OARC is honoured to represent the resident voice at these team meetings, and I assure you that we will speak loudly and clearly on your behalf regarding the issues at hand, and the issues that must be addressed to ‘fix the system’ as Premier Ford has promised. To read the full memo from Erin Hannah, [click here](#).

Be part of changing and repairing the LTC system: Opportunities for resident engagement

The [Standards Council of Canada \(SCC\)](#), [Health Standards Organization \(HSO\)](#) and [Canadian Standards Association \(CSA Group\)](#) are working collaboratively on developing two new national standards for LTC that will be shaped by the needs of residents, families and Canada's LTC team members/workforce.

The standard developed by HSO, led by Dr. Samir Sinha, Director of Geriatrics, Sinai Health System and the University Health Network, will focus on:

- Resident-centred and family-centred care practices that value the importance of respect, dignity, trust, and quality of life
- Safe and reliable care based on evidence-informed practices
- A healthy and competent workforce to ensure sustainable, team-based, compassionate care

The standard developed by CSA Group, led by Alex Mihailidis, Scientific Director AGE-WELL Network of Centres of Excellence, will focus on:

- The technical requirements that LTC homes need to meet including (but not limited to):
 - Environmental design
 - Infection protection and control
 - Plumbing
 - Waste removal
 - Use of technology

“The devastating consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic in Canada's long-term care homes have only highlighted the long-standing issues that must be comprehensively addressed in order to provide our most vulnerable Canadians the resident and family-centred, safe, reliable, and high-quality care they deserve” said Dr. Sinha. “Having a consistent approach to enhancing the quality of care across all Canadian long-term care homes through a national standard will improve the quality of life for those of us who may one day need this level of care.”

Funding for the development of Canada's new National Standards for Long-Term Care is being provided by the federally funded Standards Council of Canada and will better support an organizational culture that is outcome focused and strives towards the safety and well-being of all. These groups are assembling NOW and first drafts are anticipated for public review later in 2021 or early 2022.

Residents – Get Involved

Both organizations (HSO and CSA) are looking for **residents** and others to share their opinions, expertise and passion so that the standards will create a unified framework for LTC homes to be excellent places to live and work. There are two ways to get involved:

- 1) **Apply to join either of the committees.** Both CSA and HSO are receiving applications for their respective teams NOW:

The deadline for application is April 14, 2021.

Learn more: <https://longtermcarestandards.ca/technical-committee>

- 2) **Complete an online survey:**

As HSO begins designing and building the new standard, they want to hear from Canadians and what matters most to them when it comes to long-term care. All responses will help shape what an optimal future state of LTC ought to look like in Canada.

Survey found here: <https://longtermcarestandards.ca/your-input>

CSA would like your opinion about topics you would like to see included in the proposed new standard, “CSA Z8004, Operation and Infection Prevention and Control of Long-Term Care Homes”.

Survey found here: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/S9FBKWP>

Learn more here: <https://longtermcarestandards.ca/>

Thank you for reading this bulletin. Please stay in touch. We want to hear from you!

Warmly,



Dee Lender

Executive Director, OARC