

To:	Chair and Members of the Long Term Care Committee of Management
Committee Date:	May 10, 2022
Subject / Report No:	LTCR-CM-08-22
Title:	LTC COVID-19 Update
Prepared by:	Jennifer Cornell, Director of Long Term Care
Reviewed by:	Kim Wingrove, Chief Administrative Officer
Lower Tier(s) Affected:	Recommendation adopted by Committee as presented; Endorsed by County Council May 26, 2022 per Resolution CC48-22;

Recommendation

1. That report **LTCR-CM-08-22 regarding a Long-Term Care COVID-19 Status Update** be received for information.

Executive Summary

Over the past two months we saw the easing of restrictions implemented throughout the province. These changes signal the transition from pandemic response to recovery. Our homes continue with a cautious approach and have maintained the IPAC strategies and tools available to us, universal masking, screening, and testing. The new variants and the increase in community spread continues to be concerning.

Updates

Directive

On April 20th the Ministry released the [Minister's Directive: COVID-19 Response Measures for long term care homes](#) which came into effect on April 27th. The new Directive replaces Directive #3 and #5, and relates to the safe operation of long-term care homes and specifically to reducing the risk of COVID-19, while providing the greatest possible opportunities for maximizing resident quality of life. Key components include Infection Prevention and Control practices, Personal Protective Equipment, cohorting, case and outbreak management, accommodations/admissions/transfers/ isolation rooms, absences, visitors, asymptomatic screen testing, COVID-19 screening, and reporting. The new directive does not change any of

the current measures that are in place. It is now the new authority for required measures within LTC homes, along with the details in the relevant guidance documents effective April 27, 2022.

COVID-19 Outbreak

On April 12th, a COVID-19 Outbreak was declared on 2 North at Lee Manor. The outbreak affected six residents. Staffing levels were impacted due to an increase in high-risk contacts within the community. This is a trend across all three homes, contingency plans are in place and activated as required.

Vaccination

On March 9th the Ministry released a memo regarding their mandatory COVID-19 vaccination policy would now be a guidance-based approach that continues to support homes with their employer-led policies and best practices. It also outlined the organizational expectations with regards to mandatory COVID-19 immunization of staff, agency, support workers, student placements, volunteers, and caregivers as of March 11, 2022. As stated in the March 9th, 2022, Associate Deputy Minister's memo, ***"this is particularly important for long term care home residents to ensure they have the greatest level of immune protection possible."***

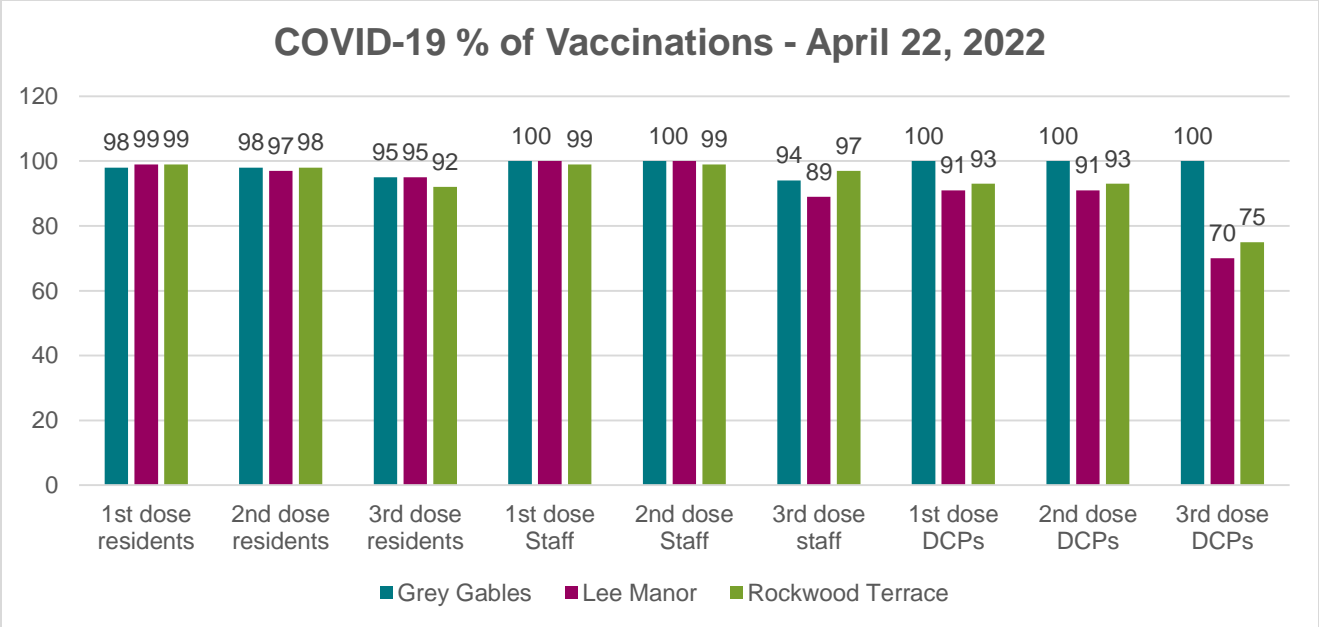
Our three long term care homes will continue with the current COVID-19 Immunization policy that states all eligible staff, student placements, volunteers, support workers and caregivers to provide proof of having received a third dose by March 21st, unless they have a valid medical exemption. For those who are eligible to receive a third dose after March 21st, they must provide proof of a third dose within 30 days of becoming eligible.

All LTC Homes' vaccination policies were required to be updated to reflect that the COVID-19 immunization policy does not apply to outdoor visitors and children under 5 years.

On April 11th the definition of fully vaccinated was changed to staying up to date with vaccines, per the Ministry of Health Staying Up to Date with COVID-19 Vaccines: Recommended Doses Guidance.

- Staying up to date with COVID-19 vaccines means a person has received all recommended COVID-19 vaccine doses, including any booster dose(s) when eligible.

Our current COVID vaccination rates are:



Surveillance Testing

Daily rapid antigen testing continues for all staff, students, support workers, volunteers, designated care partners and general visitors continues to assist with early detection. On average our three homes are completing over 2,500 rapid antigen tests on a weekly basis.

Rapid Antigen Testing (RAT) has evolved in both the type of swab (nasopharyngeal to nasal swabs) and collection method (staff obtained to self-swabbing). Currently we have been using the nasal self-swabbing method for rapid antigen test surveillance. A science brief by the [Ontario Science Table](#) in February 2022, highlighted that “the use of oral-nasal sampling may improve diagnostic test sensitivity for Omicron” as it has been “established that the sensitivity of rapid antigen tests is lower for the Omicron variant than for the Delta variant and that nasal samples are less sensitive than combined oral-nasal samples”. Early detection is a crucial element to ensure the safety of our residents, families, and staff. Effective April 1st, all three homes have implemented the [oral-nasal method](#) for surveillance testing.

On April 1st, the Ministry of Health released an updated guidance document outlining management of staff in high-risk settings. The [COVID-19 Interim Guidance](#) provided a framework for employers managing return to work of staff who are close contacts or cases of COVID-19.

ID Now training was completed in March, all three homes may utilize this method of molecular testing to detect COVID-19 in a timely manner.

Visiting & Leaves of Absences

March 21st

- Resumed visits by unvaccinated general visitors as pre-booked indoor visiting stations. Active screening and surveillance testing are completed at each visit. N95 masks are also worn.

A [virtual family meeting](#) was held on March 15th to discuss the latest updates for visiting and leaves.

On April 8th, the Ministry released an update to the COVID-19 Guidance Document, these changes came into effect on April 11th.

- Residents who leave the home on day and overnight absences do not need to isolate upon return however when returning from an absence (either day or overnight), residents must undergo a PCR test on Day 5 of their return.

Effective April 27th, masks are not required outdoor visiting, however outdoor masking is still recommended and encouraged as an added layer of protection against COVID-19. Outdoor visitors are still required to be actively screened upon arrival.

IPAC Strategies

On March 21st, staff members at all three homes were provided the choice to transition back to surgical masks. N95s masks continue to be provided to all unvaccinated visitors and staff that choose the higher protection. To accommodate younger visitors, we purchased N95 masks in children's sizes.

The updated guidance document also affected cohorting and physical distancing:

- Cohorting practices for residents and staff are no longer required unless in an outbreak situation.
- Removing physical distancing requirements between staff and clients of Adult Day Programs that take place on the site of a long-term care home.

Designated Care Partner Program

Our Designated Care Partner program was presented at the Advantage Ontario's Annual Convention on April 21st. Jennifer Cornell and Pat Morden also provided a presentation at the convention "The Colour It Your Way Chronicles", highlighting the first 10 years in making this promise happen in our Grey County Long Term Care Homes.

Staffing

Grey County has been working collaboratively with the YMCA Employment Services during the pandemic on many projects. The essential skills micro credential program was very successful. Many of our Care Support Assistants that completed the course have already enrolled in the PSW, RPN and FSW course.

The Emergency Response Team now has over 30 individuals who are ready to be deployed when needed. A number of individuals also completed additional orientation sessions at three long term care homes in Grey and Bruce and have secured employment as care support assistants/resident care aides.

On March 30th, the YMCA joined the Long Term Care Committee meeting to announce the funding approval for the PSW Training Program. This fully funded program will introduce 44 new PSWs to our healthcare sector. There are 22 spots available for Care Support

Assistant/Resident Care Aides that have completed the Essential Skills Program. There are also 22 spots available for applicants without the micro credential certificate. Training can be completed on a part time or full-time basis with Georgian College. We are grateful for the continued support that the YMCA provides. Introducing 44 PSWs to long term care is a positive opportunity for our communities to continue to “Grow our Own’ skilled team members.

Recovery and Wellness

In March, we focused on promoting staff wellness. The month started with staff receiving a letter of appreciation from Grey County’s Warden and CAO. The week of March 21st, Self-Care Wellness packages were delivered to each home for all staff to jumpstart their own self-care. All three homes released their Wellness Newsletter at the end of March. The wellness newsletter will be a quarterly publication that features wellness tips and resources, Colour It Spirit photos, along with Colour It stories.

Finance

On March 7th, 2022, the Ministry of Health announced that the province will provide a lump sum payment of up to \$5,000 to eligible full-time nurses and a prorated payment of up to \$5,000 for eligible part-time and casual nursing staff across the province starting in April. Eligibility includes all full time, part time and casual nurses including RNs, RPNs and Nurse Practitioners working in direct patient care in publicly funded services such as hospitals, LTC and retirement homes, home and community care, primary care, mental health and addictions, emergency services, and corrections, as well as range of other community based, and developmental services. It was also noted that registered nurses in a management or supervisory role who were redeployed to a direct patient care role will also qualify. The payment will be paid by employers in two installments, first in April and then in September.

On March 29th, 2022, new legislation includes making the PSW wage enhancement permanent, and provisions to make it easier and quicker for foreign-credentialled health workers to begin practicing in Ontario.

On March 31st, the Ministry announced they will be winding down the Co-Payment Waiver program that was implemented on April 23, 2021, to assist hospital capacity during the peak of the third wave. Residents admitted to a long-term care home up to and including the day before the Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021 comes into force who otherwise qualify for the Co-payment Waiver Program will continue to have their fees waived until they are offered a spot in their first-choice home. Hospital patients will continue to be admitted as residents to long-term care homes as appropriate through applicable admissions processes.

On April 8th, the Ministry announced an extension of the Occupancy Funding Protection until September 30, 2022. This extension will maintain our budgeted funding regardless of occupancy due to outbreak requirements and restrictions.

Partnerships

On April 7th, Jennifer Cornell provided a presentation to the Thornbury – Clarksburg Rotary Club that provided an overview of long term care, Grey County Colour It Your Way philosophy and lessons learned during the pandemic.

Work continues with partnerships at both regional and local levels. The Grey Bruce Long Term Care Committee and healthcare partners are meeting every two weeks.

We continue to be thankful for the support from Council, the CAO, Senior Management team and the staff in all departments, we recognize that we are in this together as we Colour It for our residents, families, staff, and communities.

Appendices and Attachments

- [AsDM Winding Down the Co-Payment Waiver Program Memo March 31 2022](#)
- [LTC Rotary Presentation April 2022](#)
- [AsDM Memo - LTC Pandemic Response Updates - Guidance Doc & Supplemental Stockpile Access Program 2022.04.08](#)
- [LTC Guidance Document 2022.04.08](#)
- [Pandemic Response FAQs 2022.04.08](#)
- [What residents can expect in a Long-Term Care Home - 2022.04.08 \(EN\)](#)
- [Staying Up to Date with COVID-19 Vaccines: Recommended Doses \(gov.on.ca\)](#)
- [AsDM Memo – New Directive on COVID-19 Response Measures 2022-04-20](#)
- [AsDM Memo - Long Term Care Pandemic Response Updates 2022-04-25](#)
- [Guidance Document for Long Term Care Homes 2022-04-25](#)
- [Minister's Directive – COVID-19 Response Measures for Long Term Care Homes 2022-04-25](#)
- [Pandemic Response Merged FAQs 2022-04-25](#)