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Subject: Ontario Mandates Immunization Policies for Long-term Care Homes



NEWS RELEASE

Ontario Mandates Immunization Policies for Long-term Care Homes

Policies will focus on educating staff and monitoring staff immunization rates

May 31, 2021

[Ministry of Long-Term Care](#)

TORONTO — Ontario is taking further action to protect long-term care home residents by becoming the first province in Canada to make it mandatory for homes to have COVID-19 immunization policies for staff and to set out the minimum requirements that need to be included in these policies.

“Widespread vaccination within long-term care homes is the best way to protect residents, staff and their families,” said Dr. Merrilee Fullerton, Minister of Long-Term Care. “We want to build on the success of our long-term care vaccination campaign to date. That’s why we’re leading the way with new measures to promote full immunization among long-term care staff.”

Under the immunization policies to be put in place at all long-term care homes in the province, each staff member must do **one** of the following:

- Provide proof of vaccination of each dose;
- Provide a documented medical reason for not being vaccinated; or
- Participate in an educational program about the benefits of vaccination and the risks of not being vaccinated.

Homes will be required to track and report on the implementation of their policies, including overall staff immunization rates. The immunization status of individual staff members will not be shared with the province.

By encouraging more workers to get vaccinated, the likelihood of infections and outbreaks is reduced — which allows for additional easing of

restrictions in homes and more opportunities for residents to enjoy activities that support their wellbeing and quality of life.

Quick Facts

- Long-term care homes must have their COVID-19 staff immunization policies fully implemented by July 1, 2021.
- Ontario will help homes establish their COVID-19 staff immunization policies by identifying resources they can use or build on to inform workers about the benefits of vaccination.
- Measures Ontario has already undertaken to promote immunization rates in long-term care home staff include a publicly available, free [COVID-19 Vaccine Promotion Toolkit](#) and new provisions that allow staff to use paid sick leave to get vaccinated or recover from symptoms resulting from vaccination.
- As of May 30, 2021, it is estimated that, across Ontario, 97 per cent of long-term care residents are fully immunized and more than 89 per cent of staff have received at least their first dose, with approximately 66 per cent fully immunized.
- On May 21, 2021, Ontario announced that, in response to improvements in key public health care indicators, friends and family can now [resume outdoor visits](#) with long-term care home residents.
- In response to high levels of COVID-19 vaccination in many long-term care homes, on May 4, 2021, Ontario [modified restrictions](#) to help homes safely resume communal dining and social activities, with precautions, to help improve residents' quality of life while keeping homes safe. The precautions are based on long-term care homes' immunization coverage rates in both residents and staff.
- All Ontarians, including all staff, visitors, and residents in long-term care homes, must continue to practice public health measures including masking, physical distancing, hand hygiene, and staying at home when they are sick. While COVID-19 immunizations have been demonstrated to be very effective, it is important for Ontarians to not let their guard down in the ongoing fight against the pandemic.

Quotes

"Family Councils Ontario is pleased by the announcement of Ontario's new long-term care home staff member vaccination policy. This policy, the first of its kind in Canada and developed with input from operators, residents and family caregivers, enables the greatest possible vaccination uptake by home staff while ensuring that those who cannot receive a vaccine for medical reasons are respected. Today's announcement helps put at ease and shows respect for the families of Ontario's long-term care home residents who have been concerned about unvaccinated staff providing care to their loved ones and potentially putting them at risk for COVID-19 infection."

- Samantha Peck
Executive Director, Family Councils Ontario

"The vast majority of long-term care staff have embraced vaccination to protect their residents. For those without medical issues who are still reluctant, a mandatory education program will be helpful to correct misinformation and alleviate their concerns."

- Ontario Long Term Care Association

Additional Resources

[Minister's Directive: Long-term care home COVID-19 immunization policy](#)

Visit Ontario's [website](#) to learn more about how the province continues to protect Ontarians from COVID-19.

[Emergency information and orders](#)

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