



November 5, 2021

Subject: Increase in COVID-19 prevalence in shelter clients

Dear Respite Centres, Day Programs, and Shelter Partners,

Ottawa Public Health (OPH) has noted an increase in shelter clients and staff either testing positive for COVID-19 or being identified as a close contact of a client or colleague who has tested positive for COVID-19.

Important considerations for clients and staff:

- Screening and monitoring of clients for symptoms of COVID-19 continues to be important as we need to remain vigilant of COVID-19 as it remains in our community
- Staff members should complete [COVID-19 Screening](#) daily before going to work and clients should be screened before entering a facility.
- Individuals with [symptoms of COVID-19](#) should isolate immediately and get tested (PCR) at a [COVID-19 Assessment Centre](#). See *What to do if you develop symptoms* section below.

Maintain IPAC Measures

OPH sincerely thanks you for your efforts to help stop the spread of COVID-19. We understand the challenges you've faced throughout this pandemic, and our work is not done. OPH would like to remind you about the IPAC measures that continue to offer the best protection against COVID-19 **even when fully vaccinated:**

- Ensure staff are wearing properly fitted Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) including a medical mask and eye protection (such as a face shield or goggles). This is especially critical during interactions with clients and other staff.
- Clients should wear a mask or face covering at all times when using shared spaces, such as common rooms, hallways, elevators, entry ways, etc.
- Physical distancing of 2 metres (6 feet) should be maintained between all individuals where possible. PPE and other tools, such as physical barriers (e.g., plexiglass) can be used to support the re-opening of programs and services.
- Frequent hand hygiene (with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub) is necessary.

Staff must continue to consider every interaction with another person as a potential risk for acquiring COVID-19. This includes interactions with fellow staff members, both inside and outside of the workplace.

Facilities must ensure that staff are aware of the following recommendations:

- Staff should maintain a 2 metres (6 feet) physical distance in lunchrooms, during breaks, in smoking areas and any other place in which there may be a chance they could congregate.
- Staff should not share any food, drinks or cigarettes. PPE may be removed by following standard doffing procedures during breaks including eating, drinking, restroom use; however, these activities should be done in a separate area while maintaining a minimum distance of 2 metres (6 feet) between all individuals.
- Staff who may need to carpool should wear a mask, maintain as much distance as possible within the vehicle, and keep the windows down (weather permitting).
- Frequent hand hygiene (with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub) is necessary after contact with potentially contaminated surfaces or at any time when masks and eye protection are put on or taken off.
- Enhanced cleaning and disinfection practices of high touch surfaces should be in place (e.g., tables, door handles, chairs, etc.)
- Staff should be aware that they must stay home and seek testing if they are symptomatic even if they are fully or partially vaccinated.

What to do if you develop symptoms:

If you develop any [COVID-19 symptoms](#), you should immediately [self-isolate](#) and [seek testing](#) even if you are fully vaccinated for COVID-19. A list of [testing sites](#) in Ottawa is available on our website.

Visit OttawaPublicHealth.ca/COVID19 for more information about COVID-19.

Sincerely,



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