

January 7, 2022

Subject: Increase in COVID-19 outbreaks in shelters

Dear Respite Centres, Day Programs, Shelter Partners,

Ottawa Public Health (OPH) is reporting a significant increase in shelter outbreaks and cases. As Omicron continues to spread rapidly, staff must continue to treat each interaction with the assumption that the person they are interacting with may have COVID-19.

OPH would like to remind you that it remains absolutely crucial that everyone continue to follow all infection prevention and control (IPAC) measures in the work place to reduce the risks of further transmission.

Third doses of COVID-19 vaccine continue to be offered to eligible health care workers and designated caregivers in congregate settings. Vaccination of clients and staff is ongoing and is an important part of managing this situation moving forward. However, vaccination alone is insufficient in mitigating risk and OPH would like to remind you that it remains absolutely crucial that everyone continue to follow all infection prevention and control (IPAC) measures in the work place even when fully vaccinated.

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 should wear properly fitted Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) including a medical mask, and eye protection (such as a face shield or goggles) at all times for interactions with clients and other staff.
- Clients should be encouraged to wear masks or face coverings at all times when using shared spaces such as common rooms, hallways, elevators, entry ways, etc.
- Physical distancing of 2 m must be maintained between all individuals, and barriers are used when this is not possible

As resourcing demands on OPH continue to increase with this wave, OPH continues to work closely with the City of Ottawa, Ottawa Inner City Health, and shelter partners to coordinate responses for outbreak management and to reduce risks of ongoing COVID-19 transmission.

Thank you for your on-going commitment to reducing COVID 19 risks in our community. It is through our collective efforts that we can ensure the shelter network – and the people who make use of this network – are supported.

Sincerely,

Ottawa Public Health