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September 23, 2020

MEMORANDUM

TO: Executive Directors
MCCSS-funded Transfer Payment Recipients

FROM: Sandra Russell, Director - North Region
Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services

RE: **Reminder to staff, volunteers of MCCSS funded
congregate living settings to continue rigorous
practices that prevent infections**

In an effort to continue safeguarding the safety and health of staff, volunteers and people residing in congregate living settings, the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) is reminding all staff and volunteers to remain vigilant in monitoring potential COVID-19 symptoms including but not limited to:

- fever (feeling hot to the touch, a temperature of 37.8 degrees Celsius or higher)
- chills
- cough that's new or worsening (continuous, more than usual)
- barking cough, making a whistling noise when breathing (croup)
- shortness of breath (out of breath, unable to breathe deeply)
- sore throat
- difficulty swallowing
- runny, stuffy or congested nose (not related to seasonal allergies or other known causes or conditions)

For a list of all Covid 19 symptoms and access to the self-assessment tool please refer to the to the [Government of Ontario COVID-19 Information Website](#).

We encourage all staff, volunteers or visitors who notice ANY COVID-19 symptoms, even if experiencing mild symptoms, to stay home, avoid going to work or visiting a congregate setting and interacting with others for a minimum of 24 hours. Prompt COVID-19 testing should be pursued. Active screening practices at congregate sites should be similarly rigorous.

While direct interactions connected to the workplace and congregate settings are key, what we do in our personal lives also contributes directly to infection risks in those settings. It is recommended that all Ontarians including staff and volunteers of congregate living settings continue to adhere strictly to practices in their personal life that help stop the spread of COVID-19. Some of these practices include maintaining physical distance from others, using a face masks or covering when outside of your home, rigorous hand and respiratory hygiene, and limiting close contact (within 6ft or 2metres) only to people in an established [social circle](#).

It is important to note that the province is approaching the 2020/2021 flu season. Because some of the symptoms of flu and COVID-19 are similar, it may be difficult to distinguish difference between them based on symptoms alone. Testing should be pursued to help confirm a diagnosis. The flu shot is recommended for all Ontarians over the age of 6 months old as a preventative measure against the flu virus. For more information on the flu virus, visit the Government of Ontario flu [website](#).

As we continue to navigate the outbreak the practices outlined above are integral to maintaining a safe work and living environment for those who enter and/ or live in congregate living settings. We thank you for your continued dedication to the health of our communities – and especially to the health of the people we support through our programs and congregate settings.

If you have any questions, please contact your MCCSS Program Supervisor.

Be well,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Sandra Russell".

Sandra Russell
Director, North Region

Appendix: Important Resources

COVID-19 Action Plan for Vulnerable People, the Action Plan included an action to limit non-essential visitors in congregate living settings, as an important measure to reduce exposure and stop the spread of COVID-19.

Ministry of Health COVID-19 Guidance: Congregate Living for Vulnerable Populations provides further recommendations that congregate living settings develop policies that limit non-essential visitors.

Visitor's Guidelines 2.0: Re-Opening of Congregate Living Settings combines information from the MCCSS Re-Opening of Congregate Living Settings: Short Stay Absences and Outings and Essential Overnight Absences and provides updated information on Essential, Non-Essential and Designated Visitors.