

MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 6, 2023

TO: LTC/AL Administrators, Managers and Directors of Care

FROM: Jae Yon Jones, Director of COVID-19 Response, Quality Assurance and Contract Monitoring
Lisa Young, Director Infection Prevention and Control
Dr. Dee Hoyano, Medical Health Officer, Long-term Care

RE: **Visitation and the Greeter Role in Long-term Care and Assisted Living**

As announced today, and as is usual for this time of year, the annual respiratory illness season has been declared over by the Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry.

Additionally, we are now entering the fourth year following the declaration of the COVID-19 pandemic in Island Health. Today our population has a high level of protection from severe illness from COVID-19 due to very high vaccination coverage, previous infections in most people, and circulating variants which are less likely to lead to severe disease.

As a result of this high level of protection in our population and in line with the provincial government's announcement, we are returning largely to our pre-pandemic practices for virus infection prevention and control (IPC).

Effective today, we are making the following changes:

- Return to routine masking guidance through point-of-care risk assessments, and ending universal masking requirements.
- Return to visitor self-screening for acute communicable illnesses, and ending active screening requirements for receiving a primary COVID-19 vaccination series, and rapid antigen testing requirements.

At this point of time, the Provincial Health Officer's order requiring health care workers to receive a primary series of COVID-19 vaccination remains in place.

As well, we have the continued expectation of all staff to monitor for symptoms of acute communicable illnesses, and stay away from others when ill as much as possible.

For Owned and Operated by Island Health LTC Homes

In the coming days, we will engage with leaders, staff and union partners to determine how these roles will transition through the evolution of the pandemic. For now, vacant LTC/AL Greeter vacancies will not be backfilled or replaced.

Over the coming months, Greeters will continue on in their capacities while observing the modifications to the role as announced provincially today. This will continue to include providing support at each site or respective facility while providing continuity and availability for upcoming fall/winter 2023 respiratory season.

For Contracted LTC Homes

Please work with your larger leadership/organization and union partners on determining similar steps Island Health is taking on this.

For all LTC Homes, funding for these positions are to remain until further notice.

Questions? – please email LTCCoach@islandhealth.ca

Please share the separate questions and answers below in a separate document to your teams.

What do these changes mean today for LTC/AL Greeters?

Effective immediately, the changes above will affect how you interact with visitors at your site. You will welcome and engage with individuals entering the building, but you will no longer screen for proof of vaccination or require visitors to wear masks.

Instead, you will guide people to masks and hand sanitizer if they wish and provide information to visitors when they have questions about the changing recommendations.

Your supervisor is available to answer any questions you may have as part of the transition process.

How do these changes impact the Greeter role?

As Greeters, you have been on our front line for the past three years, supporting safe access to care, services and visits by greeting and screening visitors to our sites. With the return now largely to pre-pandemic IPC practices, you may feel uncertain about your role and what your future at Island Health looks like.

We do not yet have all the answers you need. The Province's announcement today affects LTC/AL Greeters across all health authorities, and we are awaiting further direction and guidance from the provincial government.

When we know more we will share it with you. For potential further changes that impact the Greeter role, we will work with leaders, staff and union partners to be open and transparent in our communications. We are committed to staff retention regardless of changes to roles that may be forthcoming.

You are valued members of the healthcare team and have helped foster positive patient experiences through one of the most challenging times we have ever faced. Thank you for your continued service as we actively work on developing solutions to navigate through this time.

For more information or if you have questions, please speak with your supervisor or manager.

Thank you for your continued efforts to support a safe and healthy workplace across all our sites.