



Memo

Date:

December 29, 2021

To: Health System Partners

From: Brian Ktytor, Chief Regional Officer, North
Anna Greenberg, Chief Regional Officer, Toronto and East
Susan deRyk, Chief Regional Officer, Central and West

Cc: Mark Walton, Senior Vice President, COVID-19 Pandemic Response

Re: **Preparedness for Omicron variant: Health Human Resources**

Over the past several weeks, the Omicron variant has rapidly emerged as the dominant COVID-19 variant in Ontario, leading to record-high case counts with the potential to severely limit our health human resource (HHR) capacity across the health system. We expect that absenteeism will continue to increase based on the surge in Omicron cases, and we recognize that we will need guidance, based on evidence, to support safe return to work for staff who are exposed to COVID-19 or have COVID-19. We anticipate this to be forthcoming by Dr. Moore, Chief Medical Officer of Health, in the coming days, and we will continue to work closely with the Ministry of Health on any contingency plans.

While this guidance will be helpful in many ways, it does not mitigate the need for health care organizations to continue active planning for staffing pressures that will likely occur among the work force. In the immediate term, we are operationalizing the following:

- A change in testing and return to work processes that will support the new guidance from the CMOH which will apply to all health care sectors
- An expanded clinical Assessment Centre model across the province that will support the anticipated pressure on our primary care providers, community health centres and emergency departments

Through our Ontario Health (OH) regions, we will continue to work with you to coordinate care across the system and preserve essential human resource capacity minimizing, where possible, the impact on service. With this in mind, we are advising the following:

- Primary care and community health providers continue to make every effort to remain open, continuing the provision of urgent care in-person and together with Public Health Units and Ontario Health Teams, prioritizing the roll out of vaccinations

- Home and community care partners continue to make every effort to support care in the home and transfers to long term care as appropriate.
- Hospitals and Independent Health Facilities (IHF) pause all ramp up of scheduled surgical and procedural activity (non-emergent and non-urgent) following the holiday period until further notice
- Hospitals be ready to accept patient transfers, within 24-48 hours, when directed by their GTA/Regional response structure or IMS
- For Long Term Care homes, continue to follow the guidance provided in Directive #3 specific to adhering to all infection and prevention control measures and the additional temporary enhanced measures outlined in the December 28th guidance memo. Continue to work with Ontario Health regions to deploy MEST teams, where available and needed.

As noted previously, health care organizations at risk of significant service disruption or closure should connect with their Ontario Health regions, as outlined in the communication and escalation process released on December 17, 2021.

We anticipate that our public health partners will continue to evolve their guidance as Omicron continues to spread, and we appreciate your flexibility in rapidly operationalizing the above steps and anticipated guidance.

Thank you for all that you and your teams are doing as we address this new stage of the COVID-19 pandemic.