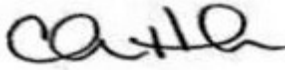




# COMMUNICATION UPDATE

<b>TO:</b>	Mayor and Members City Council
<b>DATE:</b>	October 27, 2022
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	Winding down COVID-19 Isolation Shelter Services (City Wide)
<b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b>	City Wide
<b>SUBMITTED BY:</b>	Chris Herstek Acting General Manager Healthy and Safe Communities Department
<b>SIGNATURE:</b>	

Hamilton began funding and operating various COVID-19 isolation shelter spaces that serve the homelessness serving system in 2020. The operation of spaces fluctuated in keeping with the demands of the pandemic and in accordance with the Public Health Guidance of the time. Currently there at 15 beds and three townhomes for families. These services were supported by temporary provincial and federal COVID-19 relief funding.

In line with current guidance around the management of COVID-19 cases and outbreaks in shelters, the remaining COVID-19 isolation shelter spaces will cease to operate by December 31, 2022. To facilitate this change, new admissions to isolation shelter will cease effective December 2, 2022. This transition period between now and December 2 will enable operators to develop appropriate policies and procedures for the management of cases and outbreaks on site in line with current public health guidance and direction.

## **Managing COVID-19 cases and outbreaks in shelter system**

To limit the spread of COVID-19 in these settings, it is important to layer public health measures. Going forward all shelters are recommended to have an Outbreak Preparedness Plan to support the operationalization of the recommendations outlined in the [COVID-19 Guidance: Long-Term Care Homes, Retirement Homes, and Other Congregate Living Settings for Public Health Units](#). This includes plans for supporting on-site isolation of symptomatic or COVID-19 positive clients.

How to isolate clients within a shelter may differ depending on the physical and operational considerations of the facility and may include cohorting of clients and staff. Other measures to reduce spread of COVID-19 applied in shelters include active screening of staff, visitors and clients, use of well-fitted masks, physical distancing, environmental cleaning and appropriate use of personal protective equipment by staff. With these measures, individuals should avoid the 3 C's where COVID-19 can spread more easily: crowded places, close-contact settings, and confined and enclosed spaces with poor ventilation.

Any client identified as having symptoms and/or a diagnosis of COVID-19 should be tested and isolated. This guidance also applies to individuals being admitted or transferred. Routine surveillance testing of asymptomatic clients is not recommended by Hamilton Public Health Services (PHS). In the event of an outbreak, PHS will provide direction on testing. Testing recommendations are informed by ministry guidance, clinical presentation and risk assessment by PHS.

Closing admissions to shelter during outbreak is a public health control measure that carries risks and benefits, including impacting capacity in the shelter system. **At this time, closing admissions to shelter would only be recommended in exceptional circumstances.** The decision to close a facility to admissions is based on a risk assessment, made in consultation with Hamilton Public Health Services (PHS) as part of outbreak management on a case-by-case basis. Closing admissions to a shelter as an outbreak control measure should only be done in consultation with Hamilton Public Health Services.

Homelessness System Partners and agencies referring into isolation spaces have been provided with up-to-date guidance and tools for implementing this change within the system.

For questions related to Outbreak Management please contact Jordan Walker, Director, Communicable Disease Control, Hamilton Public Health Services ([Jordan.Walker@hamilton.ca](mailto:Jordan.Walker@hamilton.ca)).

For questions related to shelter system and system capacity please contact Michelle Baird, Director Housing Services ([Michelle.Baird@hamilton.ca](mailto:Michelle.Baird@hamilton.ca)).