

REDEPLOYMENT OF HOSPITAL STAFF INTO LONG-TERM CARE HOMES

Q&As FOR HOSPITALS

1. **Why are hospital staff being deployed to long-term (LTC) homes?**

COVID-19 infection is rapidly increasing among LTC residents and staff. Many homes are currently unable to ensure sufficient staff due to staff illness and absence and restrictions on employees working in more than one home. This temporary emergency order will help protect and support our most vulnerable by allowing hospitals to safely redeploy staff as needed to provide services and supports in LTC homes.

2. **What are the benefits of the Emergency Order?**

The emergency order helps effective and flexible health human resources management to better support and respond to the pandemic issues faced by LTC homes. It is the most effective and expedient means to enable hospitals to deploy staff to work in nearby LTC homes. It clarifies that hospital staff remain employed by the hospital while redeployed in LTC homes.

3. **How can hospitals help LTC homes?**

High levels of staff absenteeism caused by illness and mental distress have exacerbated the situation in LTC homes. Additional, trained staff are urgently required to ensure the safety of residents and staff. Hospitals can help by deploying staff to work in LTC homes that have staff shortages.

4. **What protections will be put in place for hospital workers at LTC homes?**

By working with hospitals across the province to deploy additional staffing and infection prevention controls in LTC homes, we can ensure they can create the best possible environment for the staff going into it.

Hospital staff redeployed to a LTC home would remain staff of the hospital while redeployed to the home, treated as a work site.

Government is taking measures to respond to every escalated request for personal protective equipment from LTC homes within 24 hours through the following measures:

- A four-step process is in place to ensure an optimized regional distribution and redistribution when supplies are urgently needed.
- Critical supply needs are escalated for provincial action.
- Daily distribution of supply from provincial warehouses to regional sites.
- Daily monitoring of and reporting against performance target of 100 per cent of critical need requests being shipped within 24 hours.

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5. Why is an emergency order necessary to redeploy hospital staff to LTC homes?

While several public hospitals have confirmed their willingness to deploy staff to work in LTC homes, the amendment to the emergency order would ensure that hospitals are authorized to provide services in LTC homes and that staff can be redeployed to carry out that work.

6. Can hospitals ask for volunteers instead of redeploying staff?

Yes. However, the severity of the situation in the LTC sector and corresponding need for a significant number of staff at LTC homes required amendments to the emergency order.

Although several hospital staff have volunteered recently, MOH has heard from the hospital sector that they need clarity that they are authorized to deploy hospital staff to support LTC homes, and clarity that such staff continue to be hospital staff, although providing services in a different setting.

Some hospitals have already deployed volunteers into LTC homes and in Toronto alone, five hospitals have been engaged to support approximately 40 LTC homes in the city. Other hospital partners and health partners have stepped up to help their local homes as well.

More than 70 volunteers, including registered nurses, social workers, administration and medical doctors, have been recruited to assist LTC homes in the Greater Toronto Area.

Government has also been working to provide over 400 job matches for LTC homes through the province's Health Workforce Matching Portal, with over half of Ontario's LTC homes now using the portal. These workers are being deployed as quickly as possible.

7. Will hospital staff be permitted to work in more than one LTC home while redeployed?

No, hospital workers will not be deployed to more than one home.

8. Will this reduce/eliminate the need to have agency employees working at multiple LTC homes?

Yes, it is expected that redeployment will reduce the use of agency employees.

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9. Will hospital staff be permitted to work in LTC homes and go back-and-forth to work at their hospital?

These details will be worked through with participating hospitals as re-deployment plans are initiated. It is unlikely that employees will be going back and forth between sites in order to comply with other executive orders.

10. Working with seniors in LTC homes requires specialized knowledge. How can health care providers from other settings help if they don't have specialized knowledge?

The Government has the greatest respect for the unique skills required to care for those living in LTC homes. While trained health care professionals from hospitals may not have specific LTC expertise, they do have skills that can help save lives, assist with infection prevention and control and help to restore stability in LTC homes. Due to the demands of COVID-19 on LTC homes, it is all-hands-on-deck and the government is confident that LTC homes will benefit from additional temporary support.

11. What specific authority does the emergency order provide?

The Emergency Order under subsection 7.0.2 (4) of the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act* (EMCPA, authorizes defined health service providers (including hospitals) to:

- provide support and services in a LTC home, including nursing and personal support services, infection prevention and control program assessments, and clinical supervision; and
- redeploy staff to work in a LTC home.

12. Will this impact patient care in hospitals?

This will not impact patient care in hospitals. Hospitals will continue to have the resources to maintain and provide quality patient care.

13. Will a hospital have authority over the LTC home?

No. The supporting hospital will not have operational supervision over the home.

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14. What type of support and services will the deployed staff provide in LTC homes?

This emergency order will allow health service providers, including hospitals, to provide support and services in LTC homes. This includes nursing and personal support services, clinical supervision, and infection prevention and control program assessments.

15. Will staff deployed to LTC homes also follow the restriction on employees working in only one home? Will they be allowed to work in the hospital setting at the same time?

The emergency order that was made prohibiting LTC home employees from working in other LTC homes or health care settings would not apply to hospital employees deployed to work in LTC homes.

16. What protections will be put in place for hospital workers at LTC homes?

Hospital staff redeployed to a LTC home would remain staff of the hospital while redeployed.

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17. Is there enough Personal Protective Equipment to protect the frontline staff in LTC homes?

Nothing is more important than protecting the health and safety of patients and the workers caring for them, as well as our first responders. We continue to make significant progress in securing the necessary personal protective equipment needed to effectively respond to COVID-19.

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The global competition to secure critical personal protective equipment and medical supplies is fierce, yet our team of procurement specialists continues to locate the masks, gloves and ventilators we need to keep our frontline workers and patients safe.

Ontario is providing same-day deliveries to hospitals, LTC and retirement homes, and other facilities to support essential workers in all settings and ensuring supplies and equipment are expedited to those most in need.

18. Will there be any changes to the employment status or pay for staff that gets deployed?

Health service provider staff would remain employed by the health service provider when working in LTC homes. Their pay will not change.