



Letter to the Community

September 3, 2021
For Immediate Release

ERIE ST CLAIR HOSPITALS TO SET DEADLINE FOR VACCINATIONS OF ALL EMPLOYEES, CREDENTIALLED STAFF, CONTRACTORS, LEARNERS/STUDENTS, AND VOLUNTEERS.

The following is a joint statement on behalf of the executive and board leadership at all five Erie St Clair hospital organizations:

Bluewater Health, Chatham Kent Health Alliance, Erie Shores HealthCare, Hôtel Dieu Grace HealthCare and Windsor Regional Hospital were recently among the many hospitals in the Province of Ontario which moved forward with a staff vaccination policy.

Unfortunately, COVID-19 cases are continuing to increase again in our communities and across the province, with the most severe impacts affecting those who are unvaccinated.

For example, as of August 29, 2021, Windsor-Essex had the highest number of active COVID-19 cases in Ontario - at 119 cases per 100,000 in population, compared to the Ontario average of 40.3 active cases per 100,000. Over the same time period, Windsor-Essex also had the highest number of *new* COVID-19 cases in Ontario - at 101 cases per 100,000, compared to the Ontario average of 32.6 new cases per 100,000. (Source: Ontario Government Open Data <https://data.ontario.ca/en/dataset/confirmed-positive-cases-of-covid-19-in-ontario>)

In Chatham-Kent, just yesterday there were 18 new cases in the community and 8 hospitalized. There were 13 active cases in Sarnia-Lambton, up two from the previous day. Past projections have shown that cases in Sarnia-Lambton spike 2-3 weeks behind other areas of the region. During the height of the third wave, Sarnia-Lambton had the highest cases in Ontario.

The vast majority of our hospitalized COVID-19 positive patients in Erie St Clair hospitals are not fully vaccinated. This is consistent with the provincial trend.

As healthcare leaders, we need to do everything possible to continue to safeguard our patients, families, communities and those who provide their care. We are grateful to all those who have already been vaccinated. It is our best defense against this virus and the best effort to lessen the impact of a fourth wave.

Effective September 7, 2021, the provincially announced [Directive #6](#) - which is consistent with our previously announced policies - requires all employees, credentialed staff, contractors, learners/students, and volunteers to provide evidence of full vaccination or the completion of regular testing. Anyone who is not fully vaccinated

will also be required to complete a mandatory education module on the COVID-19 vaccine unless a medical exemption is provided.

However, Directive #6 sets a minimum standard to meet. It can be influenced by local conditions. Our goal is to have our vaccination rates at 100% for all employees, credentialed staff, contractors, learners/students, and volunteers.

After reviewing, examining and discussing our local conditions and after discussion with our respective Boards of Directors, the five hospitals of the former Erie-St. Clair LHIN have collectively agreed to implement a progressive plan to ensure that all employees, credentialed staff and volunteers (not including those with an accommodation for medical exemption or under the Ontario Human Rights Code to full vaccination), will be subject to progressive policies beyond mandatory education and testing, **leading to unpaid leave and/or termination for cause**. Mandatory vaccination for new staff will also be implemented by all hospitals to support this effort.

The timing of this implementation remains to be confirmed. However, each hospital will announce a deadline for all impacted employees, credentialed staff, contractors, learners/students, and volunteers to confirm they have been vaccinated, or face an unpaid leave of absence and/or termination of employment and/or privileges.

Please understand that this decision was not taken lightly. However, it is the right decision to protect our patients, colleagues and community whom we are obligated to ensure receive safe, quality care while we do everything we can to reduce the potential risk of COVID-19 amid the delivery of vital health care services.

Sincerely,

For Bluewater Health:

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