

Ministry of the Solicitor General

Ministère du Solliciteur général

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MEMORANDUM TO: Regional Directors, Institutional Services
Superintendents, Institutional Services
Public Health Units

FROM: Karen Ellis, ADM Institutional Services
Keith Palmer, ADM Operational Support
Rhonda McMichael, ADM Population Health Initiatives, Ministry of Health
Daryl Pitfield, ED Institutional Services

DATE: July 8, 2021

RE: **COVID-19 Cases and Outbreaks in Adult Correctional Institutions**

We are writing you today on behalf of the Ministry of the Solicitor General and the Ministry of Health regarding COVID-19 cases and outbreaks in adult correctional institutions. While community levels of COVID-19 and other key indicators are generally decreasing, congregate settings such as correctional institutions continue to be at risk for outbreaks, particularly in light of new, more transmissible variants of the virus, including the Alpha and Delta variants.

We want to thank you for your tremendous work to date to address COVID-19 in adult correctional institutions. Your continued collaboration is critical as we address the unique challenges within correctional institutions related to vaccine uptake.

Some of these challenges in correctional institutions include vaccine confidence and a transitory inmate population. To help address vaccine hesitancy and increase uptake, various initiatives have been put in place:

- Toronto Public Health hosted a vaccination webinar for all institutional staff on April 1, 2021. The video recording has been posted on the ministry's intranet.
- Vaccine information from the Ministry of Health, Public Health Ontario, local public health units, and other community partners has been shared with staff and inmates in institutions.

- Representatives from the Criminal Lawyers' Association presented a vaccine promotion video and held site tours at a number of institutions to further engage with inmates and respond to questions.
- Institutional health care staff continues to work with inmates one-on-one to discuss the benefits of vaccination, and address concerns, ahead of opportunities to receive the vaccine either at the facility or in the community after release.
- Local indigenous groups have been engaged to provide culturally appropriate promotional materials.

Supporting inmate and staff vaccination is important to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 transmission, including institutional outbreaks. We continue to encourage all local public health units and health system partners to work collaboratively with correctional institutions to ensure that staff are fully vaccinated in a timely manner. This includes facilitating on-site staff vaccination clinics wherever possible.

All correctional institutions have a ready supply of vaccine to provide first and second doses to eligible inmates, including new admissions, on an ongoing basis. Both ministries acknowledge the incredible work of health care and operational staff to plan and implement this phase of vaccine rollout so quickly. Immunizing inmates as quickly as possible will help reduce the spread of COVID-19 in correctional institutions and upon release.

Additionally, we want to emphasize that ongoing Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) practices are required to support the safety of inmates and staff. Staff are expected to adhere to the IPAC measures currently in place and to work with Corporate Health Care when additional measures during outbreaks are implemented under the direction of local public health units. As a reminder, active outbreaks are managed collaboratively with local public health units.

As always, thank you to institutional staff, Corporate Health Care, local public health units and all other health system partners for providing ongoing support to institutions throughout the pandemic.

Sincerely,



Karen Ellis
ADM, Institutional Services



Rhonda McMichael
ADM, Population Health
Initiatives, Ministry of Health



Keith Palmer
ADM, Operational Support



Daryl Pitfield
Executive Director, Institutional Services

- cc. Deborah Richardson, Deputy Solicitor General, Correctional Services, Ministry of the Solicitor General
Helen Angus, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Health
Ali Veshkini, Associate Deputy Minister, Ministry of the Solicitor General
Alison Blair, Associate Deputy Minister, Pandemic Response and Recovery, Ministry of Health
Dr. Kieran Moore, Chief Medical Officer of Health, Public Health, Ministry of Health
Dr. Dirk Huyer, Chief Coroner of Ontario, lead of the Provincial Preparedness and Outbreak Response Working Group
Melanie Mayoh, Director, Corporate Health Care and Wellness Branch
Linda Ogilvie, Assistant Director, Corporate Health Care