

Memorandum

Date: October 31, 2023

To: All Designated (DSL) and Non-Designated Supportive Living (NDSL) Site Operators; All AHS Home Care Seniors Health Program Managers/Operation Managers, and Case Managers

CC: Communicable Disease Control; Environmental Public Health; Seniors Health; Infection Prevention and Control; Workplace Health and Safety

From: Dr. Digby Horne, Medical Officer of Health, Central Zone

RE: Outbreak Preparation for 2023-2024 Season

Outbreaks of respiratory illness (including influenza and COVID-19) and gastrointestinal illness are possible in supportive living facilities. Preparing for and responding to outbreaks is a shared responsibility.

Alberta Health Services Public Health kindly requests your assistance in preparing for the 2023-2024 outbreak season. **These tasks will help to protect both staff and residents, and will facilitate an effective response if an outbreak occurs at your site.**

1. Ensure that all residents have a prescription for influenza antiviral prophylaxis (Oseltamivir [Tamiflu]) available in-advance of, or within a very short time of, an outbreak being confirmed.

a. **Advance Prescriptions**

i. **DSL site operators in collaboration with AHS Home Care:** Options to ensure advance prescriptions are in place include:

- Arranging for resident influenza prophylaxis prescriptions through each resident's most responsible health provider (a physician, prescribing pharmacist, or nurse-practitioner);

or

- Working with or contracting a single prescriber for the whole site (a physician, prescribing pharmacist, or nurse-practitioner).

ii. **NDSL site operators in collaboration with residents:** Options to ensure advance prescriptions are in place include:

- Working with or contracting a single prescriber for the whole site (a physician, prescribing pharmacist, or nurse-practitioner);

or

- Advising residents to see their primary care provider or another community prescriber (a physician, prescribing pharmacist, or nurse practitioner) to request an advance prescription.

- Please distribute the [Resident Outbreak Preparation](#) handout and the [Advance Prescription for Oseltamivir \(Tamiflu\)](#) form to residents,

guardians, or substitute decision-makers within the next month, and new admissions until April 30, 2024.

- b. **Make a plan for how to respond at the time of an outbreak:** Contact a local prescriber (a physician, prescribing pharmacist, or nurse-practitioner) to make arrangements in preparation for immediate access to antivirals for all residents who did not obtain an advance prescription at the time of an outbreak notification. For your convenience a prescribing pharmacist can be found at: abpharmacy.ca
2. Consider creating and maintaining an up-to-date list of residents throughout the outbreak season until April 30, 2024 using the recently revised [Outbreak Antiviral Prophylaxis in Non-Designated and Designated Supportive Living Sites Worksheet](#) (form 20630). We suggest the worksheet be completed in advance of an outbreak to ensure timely and effective management at the facility. Please note the following:
 - Information about whether or not residents have received annual influenza vaccine and the number of COVID-19 vaccine doses received may be requested by CDC nursing.
 - When an influenza outbreak occurs, residents who do not have an advance-prescription for antiviral prophylaxis will need to see a prescriber to get a prescription as soon as possible.
 - Information about whether or not residents have received influenza antiviral prophylaxis may be requested by CDC nursing at the time of an influenza outbreak.
3. Recommend that **staff** receive all doses of COVID-19 vaccine that they are eligible for (including boosters) and an annual dose of seasonal influenza vaccine. Provide a copy of the letter [Important Notice to Staff About Influenza and COVID-19](#) to all staff, including new hires, until April 30, 2024.
4. Recommend that **residents** receive all doses of COVID-19 vaccine that they are eligible for (including boosters) and an annual dose of seasonal influenza vaccine.
5. Develop a site plan for how to access testing supplies at the time of an outbreak.

Although roles and responsibilities can vary, **site operators, AHS Home Care managers and case managers should collaborate** to ensure that each site is prepared for the upcoming outbreak season.

Outbreak Management Resources

Outbreak management recommendations and resources changed frequently in the past outbreak season, and will likely continue to change frequently during the upcoming season. For the most up to date information, please review the following resources frequently:

- [Central Zone MOH website](#)
- [AHS Infection Prevention & Control \(IPC\) Outbreak Management](#)

- [Guide for Outbreak Prevention and Control in Non-Designated Supportive Living Sites](#)
- [Guide for Outbreak Prevention and Control in Long Term Care, Designated Supportive Living and Hospice Sites](#)
- [AHS Health Professionals COVID-19 information](#)

Questions regarding Central Zone outbreak response (including admissions, transfers, and discharges) can be directed as outlined below:

- **Gastrointestinal:** Environmental Public Health
phone: 1-866-654-7890
email: ahs.cz.eph.diseasecontrolteam@ahs.ca
- **Respiratory:** Communicable Disease Control COVID-19 Intake
phone: 1-888-522-1919 (state Central Zone)
email: cd_outbreak@ahs.ca

Thank you very much for your partnership in outbreak management!