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1182491

Yasmin Jetha, HCC VP
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Norm Peters, HCC VP
Fraser Health Authority
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Dear Yasmin Jetha and Norm Peters:

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in British Columbia (BC) the Ministry of Health (the Ministry), in consultation with BC's Provincial Health Officer, mobilized to rapidly respond to the risk of COVID-19 transmission in congregate care settings. Several enhanced protective measures have been put in place to minimize the risk for introduction and transmission of COVID-19 in long-term care homes and seniors' assisted living residences and protect those most vulnerable to serious illness from COVID-19. As the province continues to respond and manage the COVID-19 pandemic in BC, response measures taken have been reviewed and amended based on transmission trends in the province and system, resident, and family impacts.

Seniors residing in long-term care homes and seniors' assisted living residences are at a higher risk of serious illness from COVID-19, which requires enhanced protection measures aimed at limiting the spread of the virus in these settings. Additionally, increasing COVID-19 case rates lead to significant increased pressure in the acute care system, resulting in the need to transfer appropriate patients to alternative care settings, such as long-term care.

The *Management of COVID-19: Health Sector Plan for Fall/Winter 2020/21* identified four transmission scenarios for planning purposes. In recognition of significant increase in transmission of COVID-19 in both Fraser Health Authority (FHA) and Vancouver Coastal Health Authority (VCHA), and in alignment with the Ministry's interim COVID-19 risk-based policies for admissions, transfers, in-facility respite, and adult day programs, the Ministry is advising FHA and VCHA to:

- **Prioritize admissions to long-term care and seniors' assisted living from acute care;**
- **Temporarily suspend admissions from community** to publicly funded long-term care beds, except in cases of intolerable risk (not applicable to AL);
- Temporarily **suspend inter-facility transfers** (between long-term care facilities or between senior's assisted living facilities), except in circumstances of intolerable risk, until further notice and **ensure clients' place on the wait list for transfer is maintained** during the suspension of transfers;

- Temporarily **suspend all health authority operated/funded Home and Community Care adult day programs** and;
- Temporarily **suspend the provision of in-facility respite**, except in circumstances of intolerable risk.

These COVID-19 response actions are intended to mitigate the risk of transmission in long-term care and senior's assisted living settings; enable staff to focus on direct care and infection prevention and control protocols required to prevent and manage outbreaks; and support surge capacity in acute care. Given the increased pressures in acute care from COVID-19, the Ministry expects FHA and VCHA to prioritize admissions from acute care over those from community, except in cases of intolerable risk.

While in-facility respite and adult day programs provide important respite for caregivers, the immediate priority is to minimize transmission as well as respond to and manage outbreaks. The Ministry's expectation is that FHA and VCHA will ensure that any required service normally provided during adult day programming (e.g. community nursing, nutritional supports) are provided through home visits where possible, given prioritization base on relative need for home care services.

As per the [*Infection Prevention and Control Requirements for COVID-19 in Long-Term Care and Seniors' Assisted Living*](#), in the event of an outbreak in a care facility, this direction changes and restricts all admissions/transfers to long-term care and senior's assisted living in accordance with advice and direction from the local Medical Health Officer.

I commend your hard work to manage the delivery of home and community care services during this challenging time. As we move through the next months of our pandemic in BC Ministry staff will continue to engage with health authority home and community care leads to discuss issues and provide direction and advice in response to the situation as it evolves.

Sincerely,



Teri Collins
Assistant Deputy Minister
Health Services Division

pc: Jo-Ann Tait, Executive Director, Regional Long-Term Care, Assisted Living and Supported Housing, Vancouver Coastal Health Authority
Suzanne Fox, Executive Director, Integrated Long Term Care & Assisted Living, Fraser Health Authority
Kiersten Fisher, Executive Director, Seniors Services Branch, Ministry of Health