

Ministry of Health
Associate Deputy Minister
Pandemic Response and Recovery

Associate Deputy Minister
Health Services

Office of Chief Medical Officer of Health,
Public Health

Ontario Health
Population Health and Value Based Care

Ministère de la Santé
sous-ministre associé,
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October 1, 2021

MEMORANDUM TO: Approved Ontario Health Teams
Public Health Units

FROM: Melanie Fraser
Associate Deputy Minister, Health Services

Alison Blair
Associate Deputy Minister, Pandemic Response and Recovery

Dr. Kieran Moore
Chief Medical Officer of Health, Public Health

Dr. Sacha Bhatia
Executive Lead, Population Health and Value Based Care, Ontario
Health

**RE: Fall/Winter Vaccine Planning: Collaboration across Ontario
Health Teams and Public Health Units**

Over the past 18 months, Ontario's healthcare system has undergone transformational change to advance integrated care in the face of unprecedented pressures from the COVID-19 pandemic. Between December 2019 and September 2021, 50 Ontario Health Teams (OHTs) were approved. These teams are breaking down silos and building up partnerships to improve the care patients and their families experience.

While forming these partnerships and advancing their planning, OHTs have also been at the forefront of our province's COVID-19 response. Leveraging partnership structures and deep knowledge of their communities, OHTs have been able to respond quickly and effectively to the pandemic through a range of initiatives including distributing personal protective equipment, staffing assessment centres, and supporting congregate care settings. Additionally, OHTs and Public Health Units (PHUs) have successfully worked together on first and second dose vaccine deployment through mobile, pop-up, and mass immunization clinics. The Ministry of Health (the ministry) is seeking to build on this OHT success to advance vaccination through the fall and winter.

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Approved OHTs and PHUs

Request for Further Action

As of September 17, 2021, Ontario has administered over 21 million doses of COVID-19 vaccine, reaching over 85% of eligible Ontarians with their first dose and over 81% fully vaccinated. Locally-led collaborations between OHTs and PHUs have been instrumental to Ontario's Last Mile Strategy to vaccinate 90% of eligible Ontarians. While we reflect on our success, we must work hard to manage the 4th wave and continue our work to reach all of those eligible Ontarians who have not yet been vaccinated.

As health system partners continue to monitor the rise of the Delta variant of concern and enter into the fall/winter flu season, vaccination remains Ontario's best line of defense in protecting lives, livelihoods, and the capacity of our healthcare system. At the same time, the ministry is mindful that health system partners have been working above their capacity for many months. This points to the need for a partnership approach to the next steps in vaccination.

PHUs have been requested to lead the creation of integrated fall vaccine plans for their local communities. In support of this work and building on previous successes, the ministry is requesting that approved OHTs and PHUs, along with their Ontario Health (OH) Regions, work together to prioritize and plan the collaborative deployment of hosted vaccine events throughout the coming months. This includes working together to plan and host clinics for:

- 'Last mile' first and second doses
- Third doses for eligible populations
- Anticipated vaccination of children ages 5-11
- Co-administration of flu vaccine and other routine immunizations (i.e., administering the flu vaccine at the same time as the COVID-19 vaccine)

Next Steps

To guide these efforts, the ministry will be reaching out to OHTs and PHUs that have had extensive experience working together on vaccine deployment to seek their input on the development and release of a fall vaccine 'playbook' for use by all teams. The playbook will include examples of successful OHT deployment approaches, logistical and planning considerations for COVID-19 vaccine administration, and instructions on reimbursement for COVID-19 related costs within existing mechanisms. Once ready, the playbook will be released to all approved OHTs and PHUs.

Fall vaccine deployment will not be a one-size-fits-all approach. OHTs are at varying stages of maturity and implementation, and there are areas of the province where approved OHTs are not yet in place. We ask that OHTs and PHUs work together, and with their OH Regions, to determine the deployment strategies that are most appropriate for their local contexts.

Where an OHT is not yet approved or where OHT capacity is limited (e.g., core staff are not yet hired), PHUs should still strive to work with local providers, including providers who are working to become approved OHTs, on vaccine planning. A list of approved OHTs and their associated PHUs is provided in the appendix.

As an important partner in both COVID-19 response and recovery, OH and its regional teams are committed to supporting OHTs and PHUs in their vaccine deployment efforts, while balancing the many other existing system demands, including testing, ongoing COVID-19 response, supporting surgical recovery and other recovery efforts.

Approved OHTs and PHUs

We expect PHUs and OHTs to prioritize and coordinate local efforts with regional OH teams to ensure health system resources, especially HHR, are optimally utilized. This coordination will be critical to ensure local health service partners that make up the OHTs will be able to balance competing priorities.

Our request to prioritize vaccination efforts means that other OHT work may need to be reprioritized. The ministry is committed to a flexible approach to OHT implementation, especially in relation to COVID-19 response. If you have concerns about your OHT's capacity regarding other OHT expectations, please reach out to your ministry or OH regional point of contact.

OHTs are a provincial priority and the way by which we will build a more integrated, patient-centred health care system. The ministry believes that this vaccination effort can continue to support OHT implementation through strengthened partnerships with PHUs, OH Regions and other system partners. These partnerships are foundational to improving population health outcomes now and in the years ahead.

Thank you for your consideration and for your collective efforts to safeguard the health and well-being of Ontarians.

OHTs may direct questions pertaining to this request to their ministry point of contact. PHUs may direct questions to Covid.Immunization@ontario.ca.


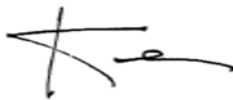
Sincerely,



Melanie Fraser
Associate Deputy Minister, Health Services



Alison Blair
Associate Deputy Minister, Pandemic
Response and Recovery



Dr. Kieran Moore
Chief Medical Officer of Health, Public Health



Dr. Sacha Bhatia
Executive Lead, Population Health and
Value Based Care, Ontario Health

Attachment: List of approved OHTs and PHUs, and OH contacts

c: Anna Greenberg, Chief Regional Officer, Ontario Health – Toronto and East
Susan deRyk, Chief Regional Officer, Ontario Health – Central and West
Brian Ktytor, Chief Regional Officer, Ontario Health – North