

For Immediate Release | March 21, 2020

Additional protections announced for long-term care residents

Vancouver, B.C. – In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) is working closely with the Ministry of Health and BC's other health authorities to protect the health of all British Columbians, particularly the most vulnerable, including seniors living in long-term care homes.

To protect this population and address anticipated pressures on the acute care system, VCH is adopting the advice of Ministry of Health for health authorities to:

- Temporarily suspend inter-facility transfers, 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;
- Prioritize admissions to long-term care from acute care over those from community where possible;
- Temporarily suspend all health authority operated/funded home & community Care (HCC) adult day programs and;
- Temporarily suspend the provision of in-facility respite, except in circumstances of intolerable risk.

In addition to these measures, Medical Health Officer Dr. Althea Hayden today issued a Public Health Order to all licensed long-term care facilities in the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority region. The Order aims to help prevent the further spread of COVID-19 in long-term care homes and protect the health of vulnerable seniors.

Under the Public Health Act, Medical Health Officers are given powers to enact and enforce such Orders. Currently, three long-term care facilities in the VCH region have confirmed outbreaks of COVID-19.

The Public Health Order issued by Vancouver Coastal Health today:

- Prohibits long-term care staff and volunteers (with the exception of physicians, paramedics and laboratory technicians) from working at more than one health care facility;
- Requires facilities to deny access to all visitors to the facility, with the limited exception of the immediate family members and spiritual advisor of residents who are clinically assessed to be at the end of their lives;
- Prohibits resident transfers between health care facilities unless approved by a Medical Health Officer;
- Requires facilities to carry out enhanced cleaning of facilities and enhanced screening of staff, contractors and visitors, and to adhere to higher standards for notification of cold and flu-like illnesses;
- Cancels or postpones indefinitely all group social activities.

The Order comes into force within three days and remains in effect until further notice.

VCH is taking every precaution necessary to protect the health and safety of its most vulnerable, which includes residents and staff at long-term care homes. We ask the public to also do their part, which includes staying home when you are sick and social distancing – such as staying home and at least two metres away from others – to help reduce virus transmission.

For more information on COVID-19 and steps being taken to reduce its impact, visit [VCH.ca/COVID19](https://vch.ca/COVID19)

CONTACT:

Matt Kieltyka

Public Affairs Specialist
Vancouver Coastal Health
Cell: 604.833.4541
E: matt.kieltyka@vch.ca