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## **Re: Guidance for Cohorting and On-site Isolation in Congregate Settings**

Toronto Public Health (TPH) has provided ongoing guidance and outbreak management advice to shelter operators, including recommendations for safe operations and planning as well as implementation of robust infection prevention and control (IPAC) measures. TPH also continues to review the status of cases and outbreaks in the shelter system and to make recommendations clients diagnosed with COVID-19 and their contacts to safely isolate on-site and for sites to continue with admissions per public health direction.

### **Recommendations for Safe On-Site Isolation**

To ensure a consistent approach across the shelter sector, TPH recommends that all sites have plans and appropriate methods to support isolation for anyone who might develop COVID-19 symptoms and to separately isolate their contacts. While we recognize there may be clinical indications for clients to isolate off-site in order to support their individual needs, [Guidance from Public Health Ontario](#) outlines how safe, on-site isolation, can be accomplished in settings with a variety of physical layouts and using different means of grouping individuals.

### **Toronto Public Health Recommendations for Cohorting**

Cohorting is used to help prevent the spread of infection in a congregate living setting by grouping individuals separately (e.g. people diagnosed with COVID-19 should be grouped together) in a specific area, such as the same room or on the same floor. Cohorting can help reduce transmission, protect clients and staff, and can be used during outbreak and non-outbreak situations.

Toronto Public Health recommends all shelters have a cohorting plan which includes:

- **Cohorting groups:** consider grouping by COVID-19 status, exposure, or risk. For example, cohorting groups can include: clients who do not have COVID-19, grouped separately by floor or by area; clients who have been exposed to COVID-19 (e.g. contacts); and clients that have COVID-19.
  - Depending on the physical space, sites can use separate floor or wings; physical partitions to create barriers between groups; or use opposite ends of a hall.

- **Staff Cohorting:** Staff should also be cohorted so that they are providing service to only one cohort (group) of residents, as outlined above.
- Plans for **meals** and for using **congregate spaces and facilities** should endeavour to keep cohorts in groups.

Additional [tools and resources are available from TPH](#) including a [toolkit](#) and factsheets about [isolation](#) and [vaccination](#).

TPH will continue to work closely with SSHA and City of Toronto partners to provide support, staffing, and capacity to enable grouping, cohorting, planning, and to keep clients, staff and all other partners involved in the sheltering system safe and healthy.

To report someone diagnosed with COVID-19 or an outbreak, to arrange testing, or for infection prevention and control advice, contact Toronto Public Health at [TPHShelters@toronto.ca](mailto:TPHShelters@toronto.ca).

Sincerely,



Dr. Alexa Caturay  
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Toronto Public Health