

Memorandum

Date: April 9, 2020
To: All emergency and long-term care physicians and Medical Health Officers
From: Dr. Eric Grafstein, Regional Medical Director, Emergency (RESP)
Dr. Michael Schwandt, Medical Health Officer
Dr. Kenneth J. Tekano, Regional Medical Director, Long-Term Care, Assisted Living and Supported Housing
Subject: Long-term care transfers and escalation during COVID-19 Pandemic

We are writing to clarify the criteria, conditions and processes to be used for determining when a long-term care (LTC) resident – with or without COVID-19 – may be transferred to acute care.

Our long-term care homes continue to prepare and care for the majority of COVID-19 related symptoms on site. However, there may be situations that cannot be managed on site and which require an acute-care transfer. In addition, residents may experience medical conditions unrelated to COVID-19 that require acute care.

Residents who live in long-term care homes continue to require, and deserve, acute care for a wide array of acute medical conditions that are no different than before the COVID-19 pandemic. There is no policy or order prohibiting access to acute care for LTC residents, regardless of diagnosis.

Clear indications for an acute-care transfer

- Conditions that require urgent laboratory / imaging assessment for diagnosis
- Conditions likely to require treatments unavailable in LTC, such as IV fluids /medications
- Conditions requiring nursing care that exceed capacity in LTC , such as delirium or acute mental health decompensation; or
- Conditions requiring urgent specialist assessment

Key steps and roles in the transfer process

- The long-term care site is responsible for ensuring the resident's goals of care are up to date.
- Should an acute-care transfer be contemplated, LTC physicians and providers will communicate directly with ED physicians at the potential receiving hospital to alert them of the clinical situation and discuss possible transfers to ensure they are safe, timely and appropriate. This may be facilitated by providing LTC physicians with phone numbers to directly reach an ED physician. If the ED physician cannot be reached in a timely manner during a medical emergency, the default will be to transfer.



- For transfers from long-term care homes where there is currently a COVID-19 outbreak, the Medical Health Officer should be advised prior to transfer. If the MHO cannot be contacted in a timely manner, the default will be to transfer and the MHO should be informed as soon as possible. The purpose of notifying the MHO is so that they can notify the ED physician, it is not to approve the transfer, which is at the discretion of the resident's physician

Thank you for your continued support of one of our most vulnerable populations, especially during the COVID-19 health emergency.