

Ministry of Health

Infection Prevention and Control Hubs

On September 30, 2020, the Ontario government announced an investment of \$2.8 billion as part of the province's comprehensive plan [Keeping Ontarians Safe: Preparing for Future Waves of COVID-19](#) to prepare for the immediate challenges of the fall with the second wave of COVID-19 along with the flu and other respiratory infections.

As part of this initiative, local networks of Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) expertise are being developed from across the health system which will work to enhance IPAC practices in community based, congregate living settings. These settings include long-term care homes, retirement homes, residential settings funded by the Ministry of Health (MOH), residential settings for adults and children funded by Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS), shelters, and supportive housing.

Through a new, province-wide network, congregate living settings will be able to access IPAC expertise, collaborative assistance and just-in-time advice, guidance and direct support on IPAC practices for both prevention and response.

The Hub Model

Ontario Health has identified organizations including hospitals, public health units and others from across the province to lead local IPAC Hubs. These organizations will work with partners from across the local health system who have IPAC expertise to ensure that this specialized guidance and support is available to congregate living settings through a one-window model.

IPAC Hubs will:

- Identify and monitor IPAC training and practice needs within their catchment area - including in congregate living settings funded and overseen by the Ministry of Health (MOH), Ministry of Long-Term Care (MLTC), Ministry of Seniors and Accessibility (MSAA), Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) and the Ministry of Children, Community & Social Services (MCCSS).
- Strengthen current partnerships and broker new ones; supporting a network of IPAC service providers and experts; working to align local resources to meet IPAC needs within congregate living settings for both prevention and response. Services will be allocated according to a risk-based framework.
- Bring forward and escalate issues of concern that are outside of the scope of IPAC through established mechanisms with ministry partners.

What is the role of public health in local Hubs?

Local public health and Public Health Ontario (PHO) are key partners in each local IPAC Hub. Working in coordination with the IPAC Hub, public health partners will support the provision of IPAC knowledge, training and expertise, building on existing local partnerships.

In addition to contributing to IPAC Hubs as experts, the local public health unit retains the responsibility to oversee the management of outbreaks. Local public health units also have a key linkage to Ministry of Labour, Training, and Skills Development (MLTSD), but does not replace the duties employers of congregate living organizations have to notify the MLTSD as required under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act, 1990* and other relevant requirements.

The Role of Congregate Living Organizations

Congregate living organizations will be mapped to a local IPAC Hubs. It is anticipated that there will be more than 25 IPAC Hubs across the province. Through their respective IPAC Hubs, congregate living organizations will be able to access specific IPAC training and skills development services in addition to participating in group-based communities of practice.

To be ready to collaborate with the local IPAC Hub and their network of service providers, congregate living organizations should have:

- IPAC/ Occupational Health and Safety programs and/ or policies and procedures in place within their organization which meet the standards for their setting, and continue to have accountability for IPAC practices within their organizations;
- Established education and training programs to enhance the knowledge and skills of staff members, such as Public Health Ontario's IPAC training (or a sector equivalent);
- Core policies and procedures to enable IPAC best practices during regular operation as well as during an outbreak. These would include mechanisms to increase environmental cleaning, cohorting plans, initiate communication protocols and processes to obtain Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and other critical supplies.

As IPAC Hub organizations become operational, they will communicate directly with the congregate living organizations in their catchment areas. For more information, or to be connected to your IPAC Hub, congregate living organizations can contact EOCoperations.moh@ontario.ca.

What do other system partners need to know?

There are many structures and organizations that support COVID-19 readiness and response activities within the sectors represented by congregate living organizations. These include regulatory bodies and municipal service managers. Some of these system partners have mandates that support or partially overlap with IPAC Hubs.

Given the differences among the organizations and regulatory frameworks of each sector, other system partners should contact their regular ministry program lead to learn how they can support the work of the local IPAC Hubs and local sector specific partners.