

PURPOSE

To support Toronto Region Hospitals and Educational Institutions when managing learners (including residents) whose placements are impacted by COVID-19 outbreaks, these guidelines offer core principles, a recommended approach to a harmonized process for information sharing, as well as tools and resources (including resources to support learners/learner communications).

This document is not designed to provide advice and/or direction to those learners testing positive for COVID-19 as a result of COVID-19 outbreaks. Public Health direction should always be followed.

INTRODUCTION

Over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been, and will continue to be, *COVID-19 outbreaks within the Toronto Hospitals. Hospital activities are dependent on the movement of health professionals, such as placements, multi-site residency programs, standing cross-hospital professional staff and learner models of care, shared on-call/fly-in call scheduling, episodic consultations, and moonlighting.

Responses to each COVID-19 outbreak varies based on the circumstances and details related to the outbreak. This can be challenging for learners to navigate, often impacting their placement/rotation activities. In an effort to support learner experiences while maintaining a safe learning environment, Hospitals and Educational Institutions should consider the following guidelines to harmonize processes, where possible, and support staff and learners through these transitions.

**COVID Outbreak in a Hospital refers to units with declared COVID-19 outbreaks (per province, TPH and local IPAC). This differs from a COVID Unit in which COVID-positive patients are cared for with appropriate precautionary measures in place (e.g., PPE).*

PRINCIPLES

1. **Safety & Wellbeing:** Hospitals and Educational Institutions are, and must remain, committed to the safety and well-being of patients, staff, learners, and our community.
2. **Flexibility:** Where possible, members will strive to harmonize processes for learners impacted by COVID-19 outbreaks in Toronto Hospitals. However, given the nuances and unique circumstances to each outbreak, Hospitals must be nimble in responding to outbreaks to ensure the safety of patients, staff and learners. Educational Institutions must be flexible and creative in establishing alternative placement opportunities for learners, where appropriate.
3. **Collaboration:** Hospitals and Educational Institutions should collaborate closely to, where possible, maintain placement activities and learning experiences while supporting patients, staff and learners.

CONSIDERATIONS

- a. Hospitals and Educational Institutions should ensure clear cascading communications and to necessary individuals, ensuring timely decision making and appropriate engagement.
- b. Learners should be made aware and understand their professional responsibilities if impacted by a COVID-19 outbreak while on placement/rotation. This could be embedded in entry to placement COVID-19 Curriculum at the Educational Institution and/or during orientation at a Hospital. Learners should be aware that if contacted by a Hospital as they have been impacted by a COVID-19 Outbreak they should, at minimum:
 - i. Self-monitor for symptoms. Learners should not attend work if they have any COVID-19 symptoms and should immediately report any symptoms to Occupational Health & Safety.
 - ii. Follow the instructions of Occupational Health & Safety for next steps (e.g., self-isolation, testing, etc.).

- iii. Notify their program coordinator/program director immediately.
- iv. Contact and follow the directions provided by Occupational Health & Safety at the Hospital they are rotating to (if applicable) to determine next steps.
- c. Hospitals and Educational Institutions should ensure learners are provided with resources and support to navigate their experiences with outbreaks (e.g., mental health resources).

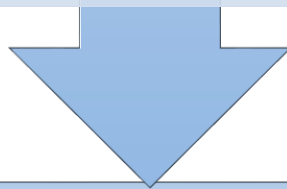
RECOMMENDED APPROACH

The following steps may occur simultaneously.

Step 1: Hospital with COVID-19 Outbreak informs relevant learners and Educational Institutions(s).

If a learner is currently participating and/or participated in care within the last 14 days on a unit that has a COVID-19 outbreak declared, the hospital at which the outbreak occurred is responsible for notifying, screening and confirming next steps with those individuals impacted (e.g., testing, self-isolation, etc.). The hospital should notify the relevant Educational Institution(s).

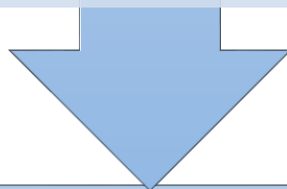
If a learner is continuing placement at the site of outbreak AND deemed fit to continue, the hospital and relevant Educational Institution(s) should collaborate to confirm placement details (e.g., if the unit on outbreak closes and alternative arrangements are needed).



Step 2: Educational Institution(s) to advise impacted receiving Hospitals and/or Clinical Settings.

i. If a learner is moving to another placement at a different hospital within 14 days of having worked on a unit with an outbreak, once advised by the hospital in Step 1, the Educational Institution is responsible for notifying the receiving hospital and providing learner contact information.

ii. If the learner is moving to a hospital with a COVID-19 outbreak from a non-outbreak location, the Educational Institution(s) is also responsible for coordinating incoming learners to hospitals with COVID-19 Outbreaks, and determining alternative arrangements, as required.



Step 3: Members to share information with Committee as FYI.

When made aware internally, the Education Executive should advise the membership of the Toronto COVID-19 Hospital Education Table either by emailing members collectively, or by emailing tahsn@utoronto.ca and rebecca.kelsey@utoronto.ca to disseminate.

FOR MEMBERS: For step 3, please ensure the subject heading is: “**COVID Outbreak** [INSERT Hospital name]”. Where possible, please ensure the email includes (see sample communications on page 5):

- Outbreak Location (i.e., building/site)
- Outbreak Unit (i.e., #/name) and Type of Service
- Declaration Date (per Hospital and Public Health)
- Have all staff, residents, learners at your organization been notified? Y/N/In Progress
- Have relevant Educational Institutions notified? Y/N/In Progress/N/A
- For impacted residents, please email tahsn@utoronto.ca and rebecca.kelsey@utoronto.ca the names of the residents to initiate resident rotation process.

** TAHSN Secretariat will facilitate resident rotation activities related to COVID-19 outbreaks in collaboration with Post MD Education at the University of Toronto. Relevant members will be notified of those residents located at the hospital site of outbreak, as well as those deemed to be at higher risk of exposure (i.e., due to working directly on the unit with an outbreak) by the hospital with the outbreak for the 14 days period prior to a rotation change. This process will continue for 14 days post rotation.*

**The MD Program at the University of Toronto will facilitate MD Clerk Rotations, with support as needed from the TAHSN Secretariat.*

STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT LEARNERS IMPACTED BY COVID-19 OUTBREAKS WHEN ON PLACEMENT

The following suggests opportunities for consideration to support learners whose placements are impacted by COVID-19 Outbreaks when on placement at a Toronto Region Hospital. These considerations are not designed to provide advice to manage those learners who have tested positive for COVID-19.

- i. Dedicated human resources to a point person for learners impacted by COVID-19 Outbreaks when on placement at their organization (e.g., Education Occupational Health & Safety Lead).
- ii. ‘Hot lines’ or dedicated email accounts specific to learners impacted by COVID-19 Outbreaks.
- iii. Joint Q&A sessions between the Hospital and Educational Institution with learners (group and/or individual) impacted by a particular outbreak.
- iv. A Learner checklist or FAQ could be developed and provided to learners.
- v. Learner Peer Groups could be established to support learners in similar circumstances.
- vi. Clinical Supervisors/Preceptors/Faculty could be provided with additional training/resources to support learners.
- vii. Town Halls for learners to have open discussions and answer questions.

TOOLS & RESOURCES

IPAC-OHS Management of learners who worked on Outbreak Unit at TAHSN Hospital

Available on T-HET Shared Drive

This matrix offers Infection Prevention & Control (IPAC) and Occupational Health & Safety (OHS) guidance to managing learners who worked on a unit with a COVID-19 Outbreak. Given the nuances of outbreaks and the varying epidemiological factors, each outbreak will be managed, assessed and responded to by the Hospital to ensure the safety of patients, staff and learners.

[SAMPLE Learner FAQ – What to Expect When on Placement](#)

Suggested questions for hospitals to consider addressing when developing resources for learners on placement during the COVID-19 pandemic.

N.B. Please note that this document is only providing guidance and/or recommendations to support individual planning for hospitals within the Toronto Region of Ontario Health. This document does not constitute provincial decisions, directions or guidance.

Checklist for Learners Impacted by COVID-19 Outbreaks During Placements

IN DEVELOPMENT

This checklist is designed to:

- a. To support learners in navigating the process required to ensure safe transitions when impacted by a COVID-19 Outbreak, emphasizing their professional responsibility as healthcare providers to ensure the safety of themselves, patients, and their colleagues.
- b. To support and improve efficiency of Occupational Health & Safety (OHS) processes in the Hospitals.

This checklist is not designed to provide public health advice and/or direction to those learners who tested positive for COVID-19 as a result of COVID-19 outbreaks. Public Health direction should always be followed.

SAMPLE: COMMUNICATIONS

These sample communications are designed to provide hospitals with draft messaging related to COVID-19 Outbreaks in Hospitals. **These are designed for local adaptation and use, as desired.**

Step 3 Communication for Member Information Sharing re. COVID-19 Outbreaks

This communication is designed to provide Toronto COVID-19 Hospital Education Members with high level information related to an outbreak (for information sharing purposes only). Per Step 3 of Recommended Approach, please advise the membership of the Toronto COVID-19 Hospital Education Table either by emailing members collectively, or by emailing tahsn@utoronto.ca and rebecca.kelsey@utoronto.ca to disseminate.

Dear Colleagues,

As per Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) guidelines, and in accordance with Toronto Public Health, <INSERT HOSPITAL NAME> is declaring a COVID outbreak <date> at <INSERT UNIT # / NAME AND SERVICE TYPE>.

In addition to numerous pre-existing preventative measures, several outbreak control measures have been put in place to prevent further transmission of COVID-19.

Notification of staff and learners is currently underway, including the relevant academic programs. Please do not hesitate to reach out should you have any questions/concerns.

Communication to Learners on Placement During and/or within 14 Days of COVID-19 Outbreak

This communication is designed for all learners onsite at a hospital at the time of and/or within 14 days of a COVID-19 outbreak being declared (including those who may have already moved to another hospital in the last 14 days).

Dear Learner,

Please be advised that a COVID-19 outbreak was declared on <INSERT> at <INSERT HOSPITAL SITE>.

Our teams are managing the outbreak and ensuring that control measures are in place. Declarations of outbreak are not uncommon; we have had several COVID-19 outbreaks within our health system. As a reminder, a unit in outbreak is different from a designated COVID-19 unit, where patients with COVID-19 are cared for with appropriate precautionary measures in place (e.g., personal protective equipment).

We believe that all learners that had close contact with the affected unit have been notified, however, to be sure, here is what we are asking you to do:

- 1. If you have not worked on <INSERT> unit over the past 14-days (since <INSERT 14 DAY WINDOW>) and remain asymptomatic, no further action is needed.*
- 2. If you have any new symptoms, regardless of where you have worked recently, **you must proceed for COVID-19 testing** through either your local occupational health department or a local COVID-19 Assessment Centre. You must self-isolate at home pending the result and cannot return until you have received an assessment and clearance from your local hospital.*
- 3. If you have worked on <INSERT HOSPITAL & UNIT NAME> either as part of the primary team based out of this unit since <INSERT 14 DAY WINDOW>, or transiently (e.g., as a consultant) since <INSERT 14 DAY WINDOW>, you are asked to immediately contact your current hospital's occupational health and safety department to be assessed, including if you may continue to work and/or other requirements (such as COVID-19 testing).*