

# MEMBER UPDATE

## WORKERS IN CONTINUING CARE DESERVE THE BEST PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

### AUPE MEMBERS SHOULD GET SAME PPE EQUIPMENT AS ACUTE-CARE WORKERS

Health-care workers at continuing-care facilities are at the forefront of the fight against COVID-19 and deserve the same protection as acute-care workers.

We need only see the headlines from North Vancouver, Seattle and Spain to know that residents in supportive living and long-term-care facilities can be hot spots for the virus. Once it grabs hold, it can sweep through the fragile population with catastrophic and fatal results.

When residents get sick, workers are also exposed. It's crucial to provide those workers with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) that keeps them safe, so they can continue to care for residents. They need not only the same type of equipment, but equipment made to the same standards and quality as in acute care.

#### **HOW DO I KNOW WHICH PPE EQUIPMENT IS REQUIRED?**

All operators of continuing care and long-term-care facilities have been provided with materials to explain proper procedures during this pandemic by Alberta Health Services (AHS).

Page 61 of the *Continuing Care Pandemic Operational Guide* (COVID-19) explains how workers should to do a Point of Care Risk Assessment to determine what kinds of PPE are appropriate.

See Table 4 on Page 7 of the AHS Guidelines for *COVID-19 Outbreak Prevention, Control and Management in Congregate Living Sites* explains infection prevention and control practices.

#### **WHAT CAN WE DO IF THE EMPLOYER DOESN'T FOLLOW THESE GUIDELINES?**

The Point of Care Risk Assessment identifies what the appropriate PPE is for the task you are about to do.

If you are asked to do that assessment and the employer cannot or will not supply the correct PPE, all workers have the right to refuse unsafe work. To find out how to do this, please read *Do You Know How to Refuse Dangerous Work?*

#### **WHAT OTHER SAFETY ISSUES ARE CONCERNING MEMBERS?**

Members working in continuing care say that not every facility is screening employees as they enter facilities. Answering questionnaires and having temperatures taken with infrared thermometers has been shown to be an effective strategy in preventing the spread of COVID-19.

Some facilities are also seeing a shortage of cavi-wipes, which are used to disinfect high-touch surfaces including communal keyboards, desks and doorknobs, as well as to clean up bodily fluids and equipment such as med carts, walkers and lifts. In some case, access to these cavi-wipes is being rationed. Some members have also reported not having access to gowns.

**If you have questions or concerns, please talk to your steward or call the Member Resource Centre at 1-800-232-7284.**

Please go to the online version of this article at [www.aupe.org](http://www.aupe.org) to download copies of *Continuing Care Pandemic Operational Guide*; *COVID-19 Outbreak Prevention, Control and Management in Congregate Living Sites*; and *Do You Know How to Refuse Dangerous Work?*