

OSACH – Protecting Health Care Workers from Infectious Disease:



A Self-Assessment Tool

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Trade marked under HCHSA – Protecting Health Care Workers from Infectious Disease: A Self-Assessment Tool™

Product Number: RINFE345

ISBN Number: 1-894878-03-5

2004

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With the onset of SARS in 2003, many health care employees and their families endured a tremendous burden from an infectious disease. This document is dedicated to them, and to everyone who remains committed to the prevention and control of illnesses arising from infectious diseases in the workplace.

Ontario Safety Association for Community & Healthcare

PREFACE

The Ontario Safety Association for Community & Healthcare (OSACH) is a not-for-profit organization, designated as a Safe Workplace Association under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act (S.O. 1997). Our vision is to inspire, guide and support our clients to achieve the healthiest and safest workplaces.

OSACH recognizes that health care organizations face increased challenges post-SARS to ensure they have adequate programs in place to protect the health and safety of their staff. As a result, this self-assessment tool was developed to assist employers, workers, health care professionals, and members of the joint health and safety and infection control committees identify strengths and opportunities for enhancing their Occupational Health Infection Control Program.

This self-assessment tool should assist health care organizations address the legislated requirements under the Ontario Occupational Health and Safety Act and establish best practices in occupational health and safety as recommended in the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care's April 2004 report on SARS and infectious disease control, For the Public's Health: A Plan of Action.

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October 2004

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Ontario Safety Association for Community & Healthcare greatly appreciates the time and expertise of the many health care professionals, organizations, government agencies, associations and unions who participated in the review of this document.

- Hamilton Health Sciences Centre, Niagara Health System, Peterborough Regional Health Centre, Temiskaming Hospital and University Health Network.
- Extendicare St. Catharines; Grove Park Home, Barrie; Guildwood Extendicare, Scarborough; Northland Pointe, Port Colborne; People Care, Tavistock; Southwood Lakes Extendicare, Windsor; St. Patrick's Home, Ottawa; Victoria Gardens, Hamilton; West End Villa Extendicare, Ottawa; York Extendicare, Sudbury.
- Canadian Council on Health Services Accreditation; Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors; Ontario Hospital Association; Ontario Long Term Care Association.
- Canadian Union of Public Employees; Christian Labour Association of Canada; Ontario Nurses' Association; Ontario Public Service Employees Union; Service Employees International Union.
- Ontario Ministry of Labour; Dr. Leon Genesove, Provincial Physician; Dr. Gary Liss, Medical Consultant; Dr. Lilian Wong, Medical Consultant; Audrey Birbeck, Provincial Specialist; Cynthia Elliott, Provincial Specialist.

In addition, the following individuals provided valuable counsel in the extensive review of this document:

- Dr. Linn Holness, Director, Gage Occupational and Environmental Health Unit, University of Toronto and St. Michael's Hospital; Margaret Jay, Infection Control Coordinator, Peterborough Regional Health Centre; Susan MacMillan, Risk Management Consultant, St. Paul Insurance; Dr. Liana Nolan, Commissioner of Public Health and Medical Officer of Health, Regional Municipality of Waterloo; Carol Ross, Manager of Total Quality Service and Safety Programs, Fairhaven, Peterborough; Dr. Hsui-Li Wang, Assistant Medical Officer of Health, Regional Municipality of Waterloo; Anne-Luise Winter, Nurse Epidemiologist, Ministry of Health and Long Term Care.

This document was developed by the following OSACH staff with the support and assistance of their colleagues:

- Joseline Sikorski, Peggy Swerhun, Craig Lawrie and Fiona Macpate.

INTRODUCTION

This assessment tool was developed to assist health care organizations identify strengths and to provide opportunities for the enhancement of their occupational health program with respect to infection control.

With the aid of this assessment tool, an action plan and implementation strategy may include:

- a review and revision of existing occupational-health related infection control policies and procedures.
- development of an action plan to implement new policies, procedures and programs.
- identification of infection-control training requirements for staff.

The goal of this tool is the protection of health care workers from the transmission of infectious diseases in the workplace. This tool does not address infection control issues related to patient safety.

A multidisciplinary approach is recommended for completing this assessment tool. Appropriate departments, managers, staff, the joint health and safety committee and infection control committee should be involved in the process.

As outlined in the table of contents, this assessment tool is divided into major sections and sub-sections. Each organization should determine the sections appropriate for its needs, as not all sections may apply. The following sections have been identified as key elements and should be included in all assessments: Occupational Health Infection Control – section 1.0, Routine Practices and Additional Transmission-Based Precautions – section 2.0, Immunization – section 3.0, and Environmental Infection Control – section 4.0.

Legislation cited in this document is based on current (at the time of release) Ontario statutes and regulations. Canadian standards and rationale are referenced. In addition, internationally recognized standards are referenced where they offer the most current information. It is recognized that while an attempt was made to identify relevant standards, others may be available that have not been referenced.

To assist in the completion of this assessment tool we recommend that you obtain a copy of the Ontario Occupational Health and Safety Act and the Regulations for Health Care and Residential Facilities to use as a reference. It is also advisable to have current copies of the Health Canada documents and Ministry of Health and Long Term Care directives and standards referenced in Appendix A. All of these documents are available on-line and can be viewed by clicking on the appropriate government links at the OSACH website, www.osach.on.ca

Appendix A contains the complete title of abbreviations and acronyms used in this document.

Please note: under the “rationale” headings, elements where regulatory requirements apply are identified by an asterisk (*).

While this assessment tool is not intended to be a compliance audit tool, many of the requirements for an occupational infection control program are legislated under the Occupational Health and Safety Act and the Regulations for Health Care and Residential Facilities. In accordance with sections of the Act and the regulations, policies and procedures related to occupational infection control should be developed in consultation with the joint health and safety committee.

Suggested guidelines for implementation, such as key points to include in policies and procedures, are included for most elements. They include explanations or guiding comments to assist the users of this assessment tool.

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