



Guidance on the Creation of Facility Clusters

Effective July 28, 2021

Background

On July 8, 2021, Minister Dix and Dr. Bonnie Henry announced that a time limited amendment to the *Facility Staff Assignment Order* (Single Site Order) would be made allowing fully vaccinated staff under the order to provide casual staffing coverage at more than one site in a designated cluster of facilities

Staff who are fully vaccinated pose a minimal risk of transmitting COVID-19 to residents or other staff, thus creating the opportunity for more flexibility in staffing to meet the needs of operators, in particular during the summer months when staffing adequately is challenging due to summer holidays.

Despite high levels of COVID-19 vaccination among residents and staff in facilities and reduced transmission, the Single Site Order remains a key public health measure to prevent the spread of COVID-19 to vulnerable populations. Designated clusters allow the Provincial Health Officer to introduce flexibility while maintaining the principle of single site staffing and ensuring that staffing can be managed quickly and safely if a medical health officer declares an outbreak of COVID-19 at a particular facility. The working groups that were established under the Single Site Order will determine the final make up of the clusters.

Objective

To provide guidance for the working groups established pursuant to the Single Site Order, which includes health authorities, to approve clusters of facilities. Clusters may include facilities of all ownership models. Operators of these facilities will be able to permit fully vaccinated health care workers to work in a casual position at their facility even if that employee works at another facility within the cluster.

Considerations for designating facility clusters

- Facilities should be within the same geographic region and consider that travel distances should be reasonable for staff within a cluster to encourage uptake
- The maximum bed count within a cluster should be approximately 300 beds
- Each cluster should be made up of approximately three facilities
 - Note: operational requirements may necessitate the establishment of clusters that fall outside of the bed count and facility guidance.
- The working group will ask that facilities indicate their willingness to join a cluster
 - Facility operators and/or employers should be encouraged to engage in a discussion with geographically nearby Operators and indicate their interest in participating in a cluster. Operators of proposed clusters will provide their

proposed cluster to their local working group. The working group will review the proposed cluster against these guidelines and either approve the cluster or inform the Operators of any issues or concerns with the proposed cluster.

- If a facility indicates willingness to join a cluster, but does not indicate any preference, the working group may assign that facility to a cluster.
- HAs are encouraged to have their facilities join clusters that include other Operators to maximize the opportunity to support sufficient staffing across facilities.
- Once approved, the facilities within a cluster should not change in order to maintain the public health benefits resulting from limiting staff movement. If changes are required, such as adding a previously un-clustered facility to a cluster, the request should be reviewed and approved by the working group, who will provide the new information to the Ministry (Doug McDannold, Senior Policy Analyst, at doug.mcdannold@gov.bc.ca).

Opting into casual work

Employers may permit an employee to work at more than one facility in a cluster if the employee provides proof of being fully vaccinated and more than 14 days have elapsed since the date on which the person received their second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine.

Employees can provide proof of their vaccination status by showing their employer their vaccination card or their online record through Health Gateway

Outbreaks

As per the Single Site Order Variance, in the event of an outbreak, MHOs will direct that staff who regularly work at the outbreak site who also work casually in a cluster of facilities are permitted to work only at their regular facility unless exempted by the MHO.

Reporting

Once clusters have been approved by the working groups, the working group will submit lists of facilities making up each cluster to the Ministry of Health (Doug McDannold, Senior Policy Analyst, at doug.mcdannold@gov.bc.ca) to be input into the BC Health Staffing Site for compliance reporting purposes. Please use the list of facilities attached to organize the clusters to maintain naming conventions for data quality purposes.