



A PUBLIC HEALTH GUIDE FOR LONG-TERM CARE AND RETIREMENT HOMES

SUMMER 2025

PUBLIC HEALTH
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york.ca/infectionprevention

York Region

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An electronic version of this document is available on york.ca/infectionprevention, under 'Infection Prevention Resources'.

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Introduction

Long-Term Care Home Requirements

The Fixing Long-Term Care Home Act, 2021 requires every licensed long-term care home in Ontario to have an infection prevention and control program in place that meets the requirements stated in *Ontario Regulation 246/22*. A comprehensive infection prevention and control program that is properly implemented can help prevent the transmission and spread of illness in the long-term care home (LTCH).

This resource package contains information and resources to assist York Region LTCHs in meeting these requirements.

Retirement Home Requirements

The *Retirement Homes Act, 2010* requires every licensed retirement home in Ontario to have an infection prevention and control (IPAC) program in place that meets the requirements stated in *Ontario Regulation 166/11*. A comprehensive IPAC program that is properly implemented can help prevent the transmission and spread of illness in the retirement home.

This document contains information and resources to assist York Region retirement homes in meeting these requirements. Please refer to the Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority, www.rhra.ca for an explanation of the Regulations pertaining to infection prevention and control.

Public Health Inspections

Public Health Inspectors (PHI) conduct food safety inspections at homes that have ten or more residents, and if applicable, inspections of swimming pools, whirlpools and personal service settings, such as hair salons. Public health inspectors also conduct IPAC inspections when an outbreak has been declared and investigate complaints that could be related to a health hazard. The focus of an inspection can include any of the following areas:

- Cleaning and disinfection practices
- General maintenance and sanitation
- Hand hygiene, routine practices and additional precautions (including use of personal protective equipment)
- Outbreak response and implementation of control measures
- Food safety, water safety and personal services safety
- Complaint follow-up

To contact your public health inspector, call York Region *Health Connection* at 1-800-361-5653 ext. 4 or email: health.inspectors@york.ca.

Food Safety

YorkSafe Food Handler Certification



Licensees are required to ensure that whenever food is prepared in the retirement home, at least one person involved in preparing the food holds a current certificate in food handling.

In addition, the *Ontario Food Premises Regulation 493/17*, requires all food service premises to have at least one certified food handler at all times while open.

Visit york.ca/foodsafety for more details including our online registration process.

Food Recalls

York Region uses the RAVE Notification system to provide premises including retirement homes in York Region with urgent health information in a timely manner regarding food recalls, drinking water advisories, health advisories, heat alerts and other important public health issues.

When a food recall alert is initiated by York Region public health, you will receive a notification either through email or telephone. We ask that you respond to these notifications through one of the methods as quickly as possible. Your response to the questions will help us determine what actions, if necessary, should be taken and to gauge the effectiveness of the recall.

For more information and to sign up for *Food Recall and Allergen Alerts*, visit CFIA's website at [Canadian Food Inspection Agency / Agence canadienne d'inspection des aliments \(canada.ca\)](http://Canadian Food Inspection Agency / Agence canadienne d'inspection des aliments (canada.ca))

Food Safety Inspections

Homes with 10 or more residents will be inspected three times a year to ensure their kitchen and food safety practices are in line with the Ontario Food Premises Regulation. The home's kitchen and any servery units will be inspected. If your home is on non-municipal water, water samples will also be taken at each inspection. Communal fridges that store food for residents will also be monitored at these inspections. Please ensure any food brought in for residents is labelled with the resident's name and date the food was put in the fridge. Food for staff should be kept in dedicated employee fridges.

Spa Services

Homes that offer spa services (e.g., hair salon, manicures, etc.) will be inspected on an annual basis to ensure compliance with best practices for infection prevention and control in personal service settings.

If your home has external independent health care provider's come into the home to provide services (e.g., foot care, dental, etc.), a risk assessment and review of their infection prevention and control

practices (i.e., audit) is to be completed by the home to ensure the provider is aligned with the current national, provincial and regulatory body standards and/or guidelines.

If your home offers manicure services as part of an activation program, please ensure best practices are followed as it relates to the sharing of tools (e.g., nail clippers, etc.) that are not designed to be single use. Shared tools that have not been cleaned and disinfected can lead to the spread of infections. Proper cleaning and disinfection is important to kill germs that cause infections.

Tools and work surfaces must first be cleaned with water and detergent to remove dirt and debris, then treated with a chemical solution called a disinfectant to kill germs. Bleach and alcohol are examples of common disinfectants.

Visit the York Region [Be Spa Safe](#) page for guidance on best practices for manicures. The following resources may also be helpful:

- [Aesthetic Manicures and Pedicures Factsheet](#)
- [Checklist for Manicure, Pedicure and Nail Treatment Services](#)
- [Preparing Household Bleach as a Disinfectant Instruction Sheet](#)



Public Disclosure

YorkSafe Inspection Program

To help the public to make informed decisions to protect their health; routine and complaint inspection reports of York Region establishments including food premises/restaurants, pools, whirlpools, wading pools, splash pads, small drinking water systems, personal service settings, recreational camps and child care settings including before and after school programs, are publicly disclosed at york.ca/yorksafes

Visit www.york.ca/yorksafes to look up the most current inspection reports of the York Region establishments listed above.

Infection Prevention and Control Lapses

[Click here](#) to obtain reports on premises where an infection prevention and control lapse was identified through the assessment of a complaint or referral, or through communicable disease surveillance. It does not include reports of premises which were investigated following a complaint or referral where no infection prevention and control lapse was ultimately identified.

Policy Review

A vital component of any infection prevention and control program is to have accurate policies available to staff to ensure they can obtain direction on infection prevention and outbreak management at any time.

The *Institutional/Facility Outbreak Management Protocol* was updated in 2023, and requires all congregate living settings (i.e., long-term care, retirement homes and group living settings) to review their written policies and procedures for outbreak prevention and response and ensure any recommendations from prior outbreaks and/or infection prevention and control audits are incorporated, at a minimum of every year. This includes a review of general infection prevention and control policies, as well as outbreak prevention and management procedures. Homes are also responsible to develop, implement and continually review a Water Safety Plan (WSP), more information on this is discussed later in this document in the Water Outage & Safety Plans section.

Respiratory Illness Prevention

Encourage staff, residents and visitors to protect themselves by learning about the spread of respiratory illnesses and how they can be prevented.

COVID-19

Visit [COVID-19 | York Region](#) for more information on:

- Integrated respiratory dashboard
- COVID-19 vaccination clinics
- Symptoms, transmission, testing, and treatment

Influenza

Visit york.ca/flu for more information on:

- Information about the flu and the flu vaccine
- Avoiding the flu
- The role of York Region



Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)

Visit [Respiratory Syncytial Virus \(RSV\) | York Region](#) for more information on:

- Symptoms, testing and treatment
- How RSV spreads
- RSV vaccine

Additional resources for respiratory illnesses are available on:

Ministry of Health website visit [Protection from COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses | ontario.ca](https://www.ontario.ca/health/protection-from-covid-19-and-other-respiratory-illnesses)

Public Health Ontario website (publichealthontario.ca)

- [Ontario Respiratory Virus Tool](#)

The Ontario Respiratory Virus Tool provides comprehensive epidemiological information of respiratory virus activity in Ontario, including COVID-19, influenza and other respiratory viruses. Explore respiratory virus data including weekly case trends, laboratory testing, hospital bed occupancy and outbreaks.

Vaccine Information

Vaccine Inventory – For more information on vaccine ordering, distribution, storage and handling, please contact the Vaccine Inventory Program.

- Email: vaccineinventory@york.ca
- Telephone: 1-877-464-9675 ext.74033
- Visit our website: www.york.ca/vaccineinventory
- **Adverse Storage Condition (ASC)** – To report an ASC (i.e., temperature excursion) associated with your York Region inspected vaccine storage unit, please immediately contact the Vaccine Inventory Program at 1-877-464-9675 ext.74065.

York Region Public Health Vaccine Information Line - For issues or reports of any adverse events following immunization or general questions regarding vaccinations (all vaccinations, including COVID-19 and Influenza).

- Email address: VaccineInformationLine@york.ca
- Telephone: 1-877-464-9675 ext. 73452

Outbreak Surveillance and Management

According to the current regulation, every home is required to have a surveillance protocol that sets out how the home will identify, document and monitor residents who report symptoms of respiratory or gastrointestinal illness. In addition, written procedures have to be established to ensure infectious disease outbreaks and/or any increases in the number of residents with symptoms are reported to York Region Public Health.

An outbreak may occur when more residents and/or staff experience similar respiratory and/ or enteric symptoms. Early reporting of a suspected outbreak and practicing proper infection prevention and control measures will decrease the number of residents and/or staff who become ill and reduce the outbreak's duration.



Reporting an Outbreak

If you suspect there is an outbreak at your home, notify York Region Public Health, **Infectious Diseases Control Division** immediately using the following options:

- **On-line Form:** Visit [Infectious Diseases and Outbreak Management | York Region](#) and click the 'Outbreak Reporting Form' button

The online form provides a fast and effective way to report cases, and it allows facilities to include all relevant information at the time of submission. The form also provides instructions to begin implementing outbreak control measures.

The online reporting form can be used Monday-Friday (excluding statutory holidays) between 8:30 AM and 4:15 PM. To report outbreaks outside of office hours (including weekends and statutory holidays), please contact the on-call investigator using the contact information below.

If the on-line form is not used, homes can continue to report cases by directly contacting York Region Public Health using the contact details below.

- **Email:** CIDIntakeLine@york.ca
- **Call:** 1-877-464-9675 ext. 73588, Monday to Friday, between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.
- **Fax:** 905-898-5213
- **After hours, including weekends and statutory holidays:** call 905-953-6478

Outbreak Management

Public Health Teams involved in Outbreak Management

Public health staff from both the control of infectious diseases team (case investigators) and the Public Health Inspectors (PHI) from the Health Protection Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) team will be involved in outbreak management. How each team is involved in your outbreak is described below.

Outbreak Management Meeting

Once an outbreak has been declared in your home, an Outbreak Management Team (OMT) meeting will be conducted with the case investigator, PHI, and representatives from your home. The OMT meeting will take place within 24 hours of declaring a confirmed outbreak.

Outbreak Inspection

Once a confirmed outbreak has been declared at your home, a public health inspection will take place to ensure practices are in place to mitigate the spread of illness. An outbreak report will be provided by the PHI and will outline any actions that need to be taken.

Control Measures Assessment Form

If an outbreak inspection cannot take place within 24 hours of a confirmed outbreak being declared, the PHI will email the [Control Measures Assessment Form](#) (CMAF) to you. This form will also be sent for a suspect respiratory outbreak. The CMAF is to be completed within two hours and returned to the PHI. IPAC measures identified on the CMAF need to be implemented at the home immediately to help control the outbreak.

Line Listing and Daily Reporting During an Outbreak

Effective management of outbreaks requires homes to report timely up to date information of symptomatic residents and staff to the case investigator. Your case investigator will email you a package at the start of an outbreak which includes instructions for completing and sending the line list electronically to public health. Line lists need to be sent daily by noon, excluding weekends or statutory holidays. If there is any delay, please notify your case investigator. Please report to our on-call line (905-953-6478) if there are any urgent concerns or an increase in severity (i.e., increase in cases, hospitalizations or deaths) after-hours, including weekends and statutory holidays.

Outbreak Guidelines and Resources

York Region Public Health Resources:

Visit york.ca/outbreakmanagement and [Health Care Professionals Resources | York Region](#) for resources including:

- [Outbreak Signage \(Suspect and Confirmed\)](#)
- [Screening Poster](#)
- [Contact](#) and [Contact and Droplet](#) Precaution Signs
- [Physical Distancing Poster](#)
- [Control Measures Assessment Form for Outbreaks](#)
- [Enteric Outbreak Line Listing Form](#)
 - [General Test Requisition Form](#)
- [Respiratory Outbreak Line Listing Form](#)
 - [COVID-19 and Respiratory Virus Test Requisition](#)

Additional resources are available on **Ministry of Health** website (Ministry of Health | ontario.ca)

- [Recommendations for Outbreak Prevention and Control in Institutions and Congregate Living Settings, February 2025](#)
- [PPE Supply Portal](#) for ordering PPE and test kits
- [Appendix 1](#): Case Definitions and Disease Specific Information Disease: Diseases caused by a novel coronavirus, including **Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)**, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) – Sept 2023
- [Appendix 1](#): Case Definitions and Disease Specific Information Disease: **Respiratory Infection Outbreaks in Institutions** and Public Hospitals – Sept 2024
- [Appendix 1](#): Appendix 1: Case Definitions and Disease Specific Information Disease: **Gastroenteritis Outbreaks in Institutions** and Public Hospitals – May 2022

Education and Training

Homes are required to provide education and training for residents, their substitute decision-maker(s), staff and volunteers on how to prevent transmission and spread of illness. Resources are available on the York Region website to help homes achieve this requirement.

Visit york.ca/infectionprevention and click on “Preventing Infections”, then choose “Infection Prevention Resources” (at the bottom of the page) for printable resources on: hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, personal protective equipment and much more.



[Essential Caregiver Training](#) – York Region has developed a four-part online video training course called ‘How to Stop Infections from Spreading When Visiting Group Living Homes: Training for Essential Caregivers, Visitors and Families’. We encourage you to promote this course so visitors to your home learn practices to follow to help protect themselves, residents and staff from the spread of infection.

Additional resources are available on the **Public Health Ontario** website (publichealthontario.ca), including:

- [PIDAC Documents](#)*

Public Health Ontario (PHO) best practice documents are intended for use by healthcare workers in hospitals, long-term care homes, retirement homes and community-based healthcare organizations. Below are the suggested documents you should be familiar with:

*These documents are updated regularly. For the most current version, visit the [PHO website](#).

- [Best practices for hand hygiene in all health care settings](#)
- [Best practices for prevention, surveillance and infection control management of novel respiratory infections in all health care settings](#)
- [Best practices for environmental cleaning for prevention and control of infections in all health care settings](#)
- [Best practices for infection prevention and control programs in Ontario in all health care settings](#)
- [Routine practices and additional precautions in all health care settings](#)
 - Additional precautions signage and lanyard cards
 - [Annex A](#): Screening, testing and surveillance for antibiotic-resistant organisms (AROs) in all health care settings
 - [Annex B](#): Best practices for prevention of transmission of acute respiratory infection in all health care settings
 - [Annex C](#): Testing, surveillance and management of Clostridium Difficile in all health care settings

- [Just Clean Your Hands \(JCYH\) Program](#)

This program was developed to help reduce health care-associated infections and the spread of infection by providing focused education and tools for promotion, evaluation and auditing to health care providers in long-term care and retirement homes.

- [Environmental Cleaning](#)

Cleaning and disinfection of the physical environment in homes is important to reduce the number of microorganisms that may be transmitted to other individuals. This link provides support and resources to assist environmental services managers and infection control professionals in providing training to staff on effective procedures for environmental cleaning.

Infectious Diseases and Prevention Reports



York Region public health conducts near real-time epidemiological surveillance on infectious diseases. The following reports can be obtained online by visiting [Health Statistics and Reports | York Region](#) and selecting the ribbon 'Infectious Diseases and Prevention'.

Dashboards are available on; Diseases of Public Health Significance Enhanced Surveillance Dashboard, Integrated Respiratory Dashboard and Institutional Outbreak Summary Dashboard which are updated on daily or weekly basis.

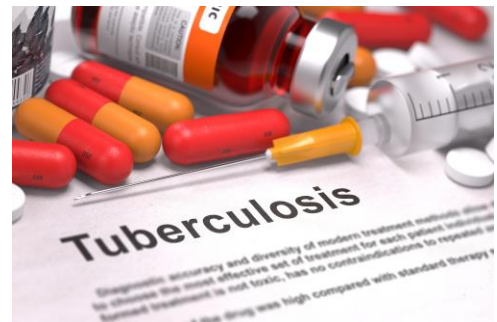
Notification Systems

When Public Health needs to send a message that may be urgent and time-sensitive to our long-term care homes and retirement homes, the communication is sent through a web-based communication platform.

Contacts for each home are taken from our inspection database which is updated by our public health inspectors at each inspection of your home. If there is a change in contacts for your home, please let your public health inspector or liaison know so they can update this information in our system

Tuberculosis Screening

Homes are required to ensure that each resident is screened for tuberculosis (TB) either just prior to or within 14 days of commencing residency in the home; unless the resident has been screened not more than 90 days before commencing residency and the documented results of the screening are available. There have been updated guidance based on the Canadian TB Standards 8th Edition which no longer requires all residents to have a chest x-ray. Instead, the following criteria will be used to screen residents:



- An assessment of likelihood of respiratory TB should be done on or before admission.
- A symptom screen to rule out active TB should be done, preferably prior to admission.
- A posteroanterior and lateral chest x-ray should be performed only if a resident is symptomatic, within 90 days prior to admission. The resident should be referred for medical assessment if indicated. If there are concerning findings on either the review of symptoms or the chest x-ray, three sputum specimens should be collected and tested using microscopy and culture prior to admission. Sputum specimens can be collected on the same day, at least one hour apart.

Routine tuberculin skin testing on (or prior to) admission and periodic tuberculin skin tests (such as annually) are not recommended for residents; however we do encourage screening using tuberculin skin tests be offered to those under 65 years old in order to support detection and treatment of latent tuberculosis infection.

In addition, staff have to be screened for tuberculosis and other infectious diseases. Please visit york.ca/tb for resources and services offered by York Region's TB Program.

Examples of TB [resources](#) that can be accessed on our website include:

- Active TB screening checklist for clinicians
- Tuberculosis Screening Recommendations in Long-Term Care and Retirement Homes
- Tuberculosis Screening FAQs for LTC and Retirement Homes

You can also call the TB Information Line at 1-877-464-9675, ext. 76000 or email TB@york.ca

Water Outage & Safety Plans

Water Outage Plan

Homes should have a water outage plan detailing the temporary measures that will be put in place in the event of a planned or unplanned situation where the drinking water is affected to ensure the safety of the residents in the home.

The plan should include information on:

- communications that need to take place in the event of a water outage;
- how drinking water will be supplied;
- how food will be prepared;
- how/if dishwashing will take place;
- how hand hygiene and personal hygiene will be performed;
- how laundry will be processed;
- how cleaning and disinfection of environmental surfaces, devices and equipment will be completed;
- any medical procedure considerations;
- pool and/or spa operation;
- personal services operations;
- enhanced surveillance for enteric illnesses and;
- steps to take once the drinking water is available again.

Water Safety Plan

The Ministry of Health has released an updated guidance document which describes ways in which operators can reduce the risk of *Legionella* in their facilities - [Legionella Investigation Reference Document, January 2025](#)

According to the document, the role of owners and operators of water systems include the following:

- Comply with all applicable laws, regulations and requirements related to the maintenance and operations of their facility
- Manage operation and maintenance of water systems; including keeping records (e.g., operation and maintenance records, water flushing regime, etc.)
- Develop and implement a plan for emergency control measures and remediation in the event of a *Legionella* case or outbreak
- Develop, implement and continually review a Water Safety Plan (WSP)

Ensure the WSP follows these steps:

- Describe the building water system(s);
- Identify risks or areas where *Legionella* could grow or spread (potable and non-potable water plumbing features and devices);
- Put into place appropriate control measures;
- Establish procedures for monitoring whether control measures taken are operating as planned;
- Corrective actions to be taken when control measures are not working;
- Confirm that the program is implemented as designed (verification) and that the program effectively controls the hazardous conditions (validation); and
- Ensure there are supporting activities, including documentation, communication and training of relevant staff.

More information on this can be obtained by contacting York Region [Health Connection](#) at health.inspections@york, 1-800-361-5653, ext. 4 or TTY 1-866-512-6228. If you are reporting a water situation outside of regular office hours, please call 1-800-335-0111.

Extreme Weather Conditions

Homes are required to ensure that there are procedures in place for responding to extreme heat and cold weather conditions. York Region public health notifies the public during extreme temperature events that may impact health (such as heat warnings and extreme cold weather) through media releases and social media.

Stakeholders whose clientele may be more vulnerable to extreme heat, such as long-term care and retirement homes, are also directly notified by email when a heat warning or extended heat warning has been issued for York Region. Extra precautions should be taken to reduce the risk of illness that may be experienced by older adults during hot and humid weather. This may include more frequent checks and encouraging residents to stay cool and hydrated.

For additional resources, please visit york.ca/extremeheat and york.ca/extremecold



Pets Residing In or Visiting a Home

Homes may have pets residing on-site or pet visitation programs that provide opportunities for residents to interact with animals. Some homes may also allow residents to own a pet. While the animal-human interactions provide benefits such as companionship and comfort to residents, animals can pose a risk of infectious diseases transmission, such as rabies.

Homes should develop a written policy that includes the following areas:

- Type of animals permitted as resident pets or in the pet visitation program
- Care of pets residing in the retirement home
- Location and care of pet dwellings in the retirement home
- Interaction of pets with residents, including supervision and hand hygiene requirements
- Vaccination requirements and records keeping
- Procedure to report animal bites and scratches

The following resources are available to assist home to mitigate the risk of transmitting infectious diseases from animals to residents and provide guidance on what should be covered in policies related to pets.

- [Pets in Facilities – Guidelines for Long-Term Care and Retirement Homes](#)
- [Pet Care Cage and Crate Cleaning Poster](#)



In the event that a resident or staff is exposed to the saliva of an animal through a bite, or is scratched or licked on an area of broken skin, the incident must to be reported directly to York Region public health for the appropriate follow-up by calling 1-800-361-5653 ext 4.

To help reduce the incidence of rabies, low-cost rabies clinics for dogs and cats are promoted throughout York Region. Dates and locations of rabies clinics can be found on the [York Region Events Calendar](#).

For any infection prevention and control inquiries, please contact York Region Health Connection at 1-800-361-5653 ext. 4 or email health.inspectors@york.ca.

Appendix A – Public Health Contact Information

To securely report new outbreaks, please visit:

york.ca/outbreakmanagement

Name of Program	Nature of Inquiry	Contact Details
Control of Infectious Diseases (CID)	For issues or reports of any Diseases of Public Health Significance, respiratory (including COVID-19) or enteric cases and potential and ongoing outbreaks at facilities.	Email address: CIDIntakeLine@york.ca Telephone: 1-877-464-9675 ext. 73588 On-call Response Telephone: 905-953-6478 Fax number: 905-898-5213
Health Protection - Health Connection Inspectors	For issues or requests related to health protection inspections/investigations, Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) or audits.	Email address: Health.Inspectors@york.ca Telephone: 1-800-361-5653 On-call Response Telephone: 1-888-335-0111
York Region Public Health Vaccine Information Line	For issues or reports of any adverse events following immunization or general questions about vaccinations (all vaccinations, including COVID-19 and Influenza). This information line is also open to the public.	Email address: VaccineInformationLine@york.ca Telephone: 1-877-464-9675 ext. 73452
Vaccine Inventory	For issues and requests related to vaccine ordering, distribution, storage, and handling including reporting adverse storage conditions (ASC) or temperature excursions.	Email Address: vaccineinventory@york.ca General Inquiries: 1-877-464-9675 ext. 74033 Report ASC: 1-877-464-9675 ext. 74065 For more information visit: www.york.ca/vaccineinventory

Appendix B – Outbreak Management Tools

Tools and resources are sent in the outbreak declaration email and will be available on York Region's [website](#)

Application	Name of Tool	Use of Tool or Resource
Respiratory and Enteric Outbreaks	Outbreak Management Team Meeting Agendas (Long-Term Care Homes, Retirement Homes, and Congregate Living Settings)	A meeting is held with facility, public health, and other partners (Outbreak Management Team) for newly declared confirmed outbreaks using the applicable agenda tool. This document can be referenced before and throughout the duration of the outbreak.
Respiratory/Outbreaks	Guidelines when submitting the outbreak line lists, daily update form, and hospitalization and death table	Tip sheet and instructions on how to complete and submit the daily update, line lists, and hospitalization and death table
	Respiratory Daily Update Form, Line Lists, Hospitalization and Death Table	Summary of information regarding suspect, probable or confirmed cases associated with an outbreak. Completed and submitted to YRPH Monday-Friday (excluding statutory holidays).
	COVID-19 and Respiratory Virus Test Requisition	Used when sending samples to Public Health Ontario Laboratory. Lab requisitions are to be printed on green paper.
Enteric Outbreaks	Enteric Daily Update, Line List, Hospitalization and Death Table	Summary of information regarding suspect, probable or confirmed cases associated with an outbreak. Completed and submitted to YRPH Monday-Friday (excluding statutory holidays).
	Enteric Lab Requisitions	Used when sending samples to Public Health Ontario Lab. Lab requisition is to be printed on green paper

