



## ARCH Bulletin on COVID-19: Priority Testing Guidelines

Over the last month, testing to control the spread of COVID-19 has become an important issue for persons with disabilities across Ontario. On April 16, 2020, Premier Ford announced new guidelines that expand the groups of people who can receive priority COVID-19 testing.

Under the new guidelines the following people can get priority testing:

- Individuals working or living in “congregate” settings. Congregate settings are places where a number of people live, meet or gather close to one another. Congregate settings include:
  - Homeless Shelters
  - Group Homes
  - Community Support Living
  - Disability-specific Communities
  - Short-term Rehab
- Essential Workers
- People Living with Healthcare Workers
- Care Providers
- First Responders
- People in frequent contact with the healthcare system

In order to be tested, you must have been in contact with someone who has COVID-19 or you have a new or worsening symptom. COVID-19 symptoms include: fever; coughing; shortness of breath; sore throat; runny nose; sneezing; difficulty speaking; new problems with smell or taste; nausea; and abdominal pain.

If you believe that you need to be tested, there are several things you can do.

- You can do a self-assessment to find out if your situation is serious. Go to: <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/self-assessment/>
- You can contact your doctor.
- You can contact Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000 to discuss your symptoms and to find the testing centre closest to you.
- If you live in Toronto you can contact Public Health by email: [PublicHealth@toronto.ca](mailto:PublicHealth@toronto.ca)

- If you do not live in Toronto and want to find the testing site closest to you, go to: <https://www.phdapps.health.gov.on.ca/PHULocator/>
- If your symptoms are serious, you can go to your local hospital's emergency department. Only call 911 if you think there is an emergency.
- If you are concerned and are living in a congregate setting, you can contact a worker, manager or supervisor in the place you live to make them aware of your concerns.

Transportation to testing centres or hospitals remains a problem. Many transit and/or para-transit companies across Ontario will not accept people with symptoms of COVID-19 on buses. Some para-transit providers may have buses only used to take people to testing centres.

Importantly, on April 22, 2020 the NDP asked the Government to test for COVID-19 in the homes of persons with disabilities, who may not be able to travel to testing centres. In response, Health Minister Christine Elliott stated that if people need to be tested but cannot travel to testing centres, the Government agrees that testing can be done in people's homes. This is good news and we will ask for a detailed plan from the Government as to when and how this mobile testing will be done.

If you have any questions about testing for COVID-19 in Ontario please contact ARCH for confidential and free legal summary advice to discuss the issue further with an ARCH lawyer.

### **For more information**

Persons with disabilities who live in Ontario can call ARCH for free, confidential legal information and summary advice. To find out about the kind of legal advice ARCH provides and how to book an appointment, please use the following link: [www.archdisabilitylaw.ca/services](http://www.archdisabilitylaw.ca/services)