



## COVID-19 Outbreak Definitions in Ottawa over Time

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, definitions of outbreaks in various settings have changed as epidemiology, testing and the public health approach to COVID-19 have changed. All outbreaks reported publicly by Ottawa Public Health (OPH) reflect the outbreak definitions at the time they were declared open. This document describes those changes from March 2020 through February 2022 in the summary Table 1 and in more detail in the text below.

**Healthcare Institutions:** 2 or more staff or resident/patient/visitor cases of laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 with an epidemiological link, within a 10-day period, where at least one case could have reasonably acquired their infection in the facility is considered an outbreak in long-term care homes (LTCH), retirement homes (RH), public hospitals, and other healthcare institutions (e.g. group home, assisted living, group shelter). This definition came into effect January 11, 2022 (February 16, 2022 in hospitals). A similar definition considering epidemiological links within 14 days was used beginning May 10, 2020 for public hospitals, April 7, 2021 for LTCH and RH, and November 29, 2021 for other healthcare institutions. Prior to this definition coming into effect for each setting, 1 staff or resident/patient/visitor case of laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 was considered an outbreak.

**Childcare & Education:** Starting January 1, 2022, OPH paused reporting new school and childcare COVID-19 outbreaks. From July to November 9, 2020, 1 child or staff (or household member) case of laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 is considered an outbreak in a childcare establishment. Starting November 10, 2020, 2 children or staff cases of laboratory-confirmed COVID-10 within a 14-day period where at least one case could have reasonably acquired their infection in the childcare establishment is considered an outbreak in a childcare establishment.

Starting August 26, 2020, 2 student or staff (or visitor) cases of laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 within a specific class within a 14-day period where at least one case could have reasonably acquired their infection at school (including transportation and before/after school care) is considered an outbreak in an educational establishment. Starting December 20, 2021, 5 student or staff (or visitor) cases of laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 within the same school within a 14-day period was considered an outbreak in an educational establishment.

**Community:** Starting January 2, 2022, OPH paused reporting new community COVID-19 outbreaks. From June 11, 2020, 2 or more laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 cases with an epidemiological link (e.g. same work area, same shift) within a 14-day period where at least 2 cases could have reasonably acquired their infection in the workplace is considered a workplace community outbreak.

Starting October 1, 2020, OPH defined non-workplace community outbreaks (excluding post-secondary institutions which use school outbreak definitions) as 5 or more laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 cases from at least 2 different households with an epidemiological link (e.g. connection in person, place and time) in the setting within a 14-day period where at least 4 of the cases could have reasonably acquired their infection in the setting.

Table 1. COVID-19 outbreak definitions over time by setting and date implemented, Ottawa

Setting	1 or more confirmed cases	2 or more confirmed cases within 14 days with epi-link	2 or more cases with positive PCR OR rapid molecular test OR rapid antigen test within 10 days with epi-link	5 or more confirmed cases from at least 2 households within 14 days with epi-link <sup>1</sup>	5 or more confirmed cases within a 14 day period <sup>1</sup>	No longer reporting
Long-term care home	April 1, 2020	April 7, 2021	January 11, 2022	N/A	N/A	N/A
Retirement home	April 1, 2020	April 7, 2021	January 11, 2022	N/A	N/A	N/A
Hospital	April 1, 2020	May 10, 2020	February 16, 2022	N/A	N/A	N/A
Other healthcare <sup>2</sup>	April 1, 2020	November 29, 2021	January 11, 2022	N/A	N/A	N/A
Childcare	N/A	November 10, 2020	N/A	N/A	N/A	January 1, 2022
School	N/A	August 11, 2021	N/A	N/A	December 20, 2021	January 1, 2022
Non-workplace community	N/A	N/A	N/A	October 1, 2020	N/A	January 2, 2022
Workplace community	N/A	June 11, 2020	N/A	N/A	N/A	January 2, 2022

## References

1. Ontario Ministry of Health. [COVID-19 Guidance : Long-Term Care Homes and Retirement Homes for Public Health Units](#). Version 4 – February 3, 2022.
2. Ontario Ministry of Health. [COVID-19 Guidance: School Case, Contact, and Outbreak Management](#). Updated August 11, 2021.
3. Ontario Ministry of Health. [COVID-19 Interim Guidance for Schools and Child Care: Omicron Surge](#). Version 1.0 – January 10, 2022.
4. Ontario Ministry of Health. [COVID-19 Guidance: Congregate Living for Vulnerable Populations](#). Version 2 – November 29, 2021.
5. Ontario Ministry of Health. [COVID-19 Guidance: Workplace Outbreaks](#). Version 2.0, October 5, 2021.
6. Ontario Ministry of Health. [COVID-19 Guidance: Acute Care](#). Version 7 – February 16, 2022.

<sup>1</sup> OPH definition.

<sup>2</sup> Includes congregate living settings such as group homes, shelters, and supported independent living. Adult correctional facilities follow guidance from the Ministry of the Solicitor General.