

## Infection Prevention and Control Core Competencies for Health-Care Workers

### Purpose

The purpose of this document is to outline a set of common core competencies in Infection Prevention and Control that apply to all healthcare workers across Long Term Care/Personal Care Homes. The basic core competencies serve as a platform for adding occupation specific competencies. The objective was to identify the specific competencies healthcare workers need to be able to do to protect themselves in their working environment as well as protecting their patients/residents/clients. Some competencies fall directly within the purview of Infection Prevention and Control (IP&C) while others are outside. Each facility is to ensure there is at least one designated staff member, i.e., the site Infection Control Support Associate (ICSA) responsible for the implementation of these core competencies. These competencies can be used to develop training for existing health care workers and for integration into training programs for all future health care workers. Staff shall receive education on these core competencies upon hire. Continuing education will be provided based on outlined frequencies for each sub-section, as well as based on identified need.

It is an expectation staff and service providers in the health care organization have the knowledge, skills and training required to consistently implement effective IP&C practices in their area of work, as appropriate. The multi-faceted organizational approach to IP&C includes an education program tailored to its IP&C program priorities, services, and patient populations, that is directed to all who work in the organization. IP&C educational programs meet the needs of the audience for which they are given and are flexible enough to provide learning experiences for people with a wide range of educational backgrounds, particularly those providing direct patient care. Staff not engaged in patient care will benefit from education on basic hygiene practices; Routine Practices, including the chain of infection; basic microbiology; immunization; and attendance management protocols regarding staff illness.

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<sup>1</sup> Healthcare workers include any individual who works in a LTC/PCH environment, regardless of department or position title. These staff, when required, will have direct contact with residents in the care environment including not limited to nurses, physicians, allied health, support services, housekeepers, food services, administration, and others.

<sup>2</sup> Patients are all persons who receive or have requested health care or services. The terms “client” or “resident” is also used, subject to the health care setting.

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Core Competency Category	Detailed Core Competency
Understands Basic Microbiology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Recognizes that microorganisms can be bacteria, viruses, etc.</li> <li>✓ Understands the concepts of normal flora versus pathogenic microorganisms</li> <li>✓ Understand basic microbiology of Antibiotic Resistant Organisms (AROs) (Methicillin Resistant <i>Staphylococcus aureus</i> (MRSA), Carbapenemase Producing <i>Enterobacteriaceae</i> (CPE) and <i>Clostridioides difficile</i> infection (CDI), including local isolation or patient management protocols, etc.</li> <li>✓ Understands the concepts of normal flora versus pathogenic microorganisms</li> </ul>
Understands the 'Chain of Infection'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Understands the three components required for infection transmission (presence of an organism, route of transmission of the organism from one person to another, a host who is susceptible to infection)</li> <li>✓ Understands how to break the Chain of Infection</li> <li>✓ Recognizes the routes of transmission of infectious organisms (how they move from one person to another) i.e., Contact, Droplet, Airborne routes</li> <li>✓ Recognizes characteristics of a susceptible host</li> <li>✓ Demonstrates the ability to apply knowledge about one disease to another similar disease, e.g., Ebola and other hemorrhagic diseases, influenza and other upper respiratory tract infections</li> </ul>
Understands the Importance of Surveillance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Understands the ARO, CDI and other relevant infection rates for their unit(s)/area(s)</li> <li>✓ Understands epidemiologic principles of infectious diseases and distributions relative to person, place, and time</li> <li>✓ Understands the importance of travel history and related travel restrictions, i.e., knowing what and where infectious diseases are circulating, e.g., Ebola, measles</li> </ul>
Understands and Demonstrates the use of Point of Care Risk Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Understands the principles of Point of Care Risk Assessment (PCRA)</li> <li>✓ Applies PCRA to every patient/environment interaction</li> <li>✓ Assesses the need for various Routine Practices based on a PCRA</li> </ul>

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<p>Understands and uses Routine Practices</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Applies Routine Practices as the minimum practice standards in all settings all the time</li> <li>✓ Understands that Routine Practices are the key to preventing transmission of organisms among healthcare workers, physicians, patients, and visitors</li> <li>✓ Understands the hierarchy of controls</li> <li>✓ Understands that Source Control, achieved through administrative and engineering measures, is an effective way to prevent the transmission of infectious agents in all healthcare settings. Source Control includes but is not limited to:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Respiratory Etiquette and its importance</li> <li>○ Patient management including bed management, isolation, etc., and</li> <li>○ Visitor management</li> </ul> </li> <li>✓ Champions Infection Prevention and Control principles to other healthcare workers, physicians, patients, and visitors</li> </ul>
<p>Understands the Importance of Hand Hygiene and Demonstrates Acceptable Methods</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Recognizes hand hygiene is the best method of preventing transmission of infectious organisms</li> <li>✓ Understands the importance of alcohol based hand rub (ABHR) at the point of care</li> <li>✓ Understands the 4 moments for hand hygiene</li> <li>✓ Understands the patient environment and healthcare environment</li> <li>✓ Understands and demonstrates acceptable levels of hand hygiene with ABHR as the primary method and hand washing when hands are visibly soiled; and understands how to perform hand hygiene for visibly soiled hands when water is unavailable.</li> <li>✓ Demonstrates when it is necessary to perform hand hygiene</li> <li>✓ Knows the hand hygiene compliance rate(s) for their unit(s) or area(s)</li> <li>✓ Understands the importance of maintaining healthy hands and risks posed by artificial nails/extenders, rings, and other hand/wrist jewelry</li> </ul>

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Understands and Demonstrates use of Appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Lists the appropriate and required PPE items for specific activities, clinical presentations and known diagnoses</li> <li>✓ Demonstrates knowledge about when and how to safely put on and take off PPE</li> <li>✓ Consistently uses PPE appropriately</li> <li>✓ Is 'fit tested' and performs a 'seal check' consistently each time a respirator is used</li> </ul>
Understands and Demonstrates the use of Additional Precautions: Why and When they are used	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Understands Additional Precautions, in addition to Routine Practices, are used for clinical presentations or known diagnoses/microorganisms as well as precautions and associated PPE use for emerging pathogens</li> <li>✓ Understands in the situation where a novel microorganism is involved, there may be the need for enhanced precautions/measures</li> <li>✓ Understands the route of transmission of the organism determines which type of precaution category is needed (i.e., Contact, Droplet and/or Airborne)</li> <li>✓ Understands and can demonstrate the elements/components for each type of precaution category (i.e., Contact, Droplet and/or Airborne), and how and why these categories are combined</li> </ul>
Understands how to appropriately prevent and manage occupational exposures to sharps and blood and body fluids (Workplace Health and Safety)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Safely manages blood and body fluids</li> <li>✓ Safely manages sharps</li> <li>✓ Recognizes that prompt assessment is required for any occupational exposure to sharps and blood or body fluids</li> <li>✓ Understands how to safely manage an occupational exposure to sharps, including the first aid necessary for puncture exposures</li> <li>✓ Understands how to safely manage an occupational exposure to blood and body fluids, including the necessary first aid for fluid exposures</li> </ul>

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<p>Understands the difference between general, biomedical, pharmaceutical or biohazardous wastes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Understands how to safely dispose of blood and body fluids</li> <li>✓ Understands where to dispose of various types of waste items including blood and body fluids based on municipal/regional regulations</li> <li>✓ Able to identify and dispose of selected items as general, biomedical or biohazardous wastes</li> <li>✓ Understands which containers are used for general, biomedical or biohazardous wastes</li> </ul>
<p>Understands the cleaning, disinfecting, reprocessing and storage requirements for health-care equipment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Understands the differences between critical, semi-critical and non-critical health care equipment</li> <li>✓ Understands non-critical health care equipment which touches intact skin requires appropriate cleaning, disinfection, and storage between uses; and that personal use items cannot be shared</li> <li>✓ Understands the difference between 'single-use', 'single-patient use' and 'reusable' medical devices</li> <li>✓ Understands semi-critical health care equipment that contacts non-intact skin or intact mucous membranes requires cleaning to remove organic material, followed by appropriate high-level disinfection and storage between uses</li> <li>✓ Understands critical health care equipment that is introduced directly into the bloodstream or other normally sterile body sites must be thoroughly cleaned to remove organic material, then appropriately sterilized and stored between uses</li> <li>✓ Recognizes not all cleaning products or disinfectants are the same and requirements for wet contact time</li> <li>✓ Demonstrates the appropriate cleaning, reprocessing and storage techniques as per manufacturers' instructions, including dry times</li> <li>✓ Understands device reprocessing must be done in an appropriate and designated area</li> <li>✓ Recognizes high-touch contact areas within a patient/resident/client environment</li> <li>✓ Understands the difference between cleaning and disinfection; and the need to clean before disinfection or sterilization</li> </ul>

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Understands the role of vaccine in preventing certain infections including annual influenza	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Understands vaccines can prevent infection in susceptible persons</li> <li>✓ Recognizes why annual influenza immunization is recommended and important</li> <li>✓ Understands they should be immune to vaccine-preventable diseases such as measles and mumps per immunization recommendations</li> <li>✓ Recognizes a staff member with an infectious condition can pose a risk to other health care workers, patients, and visitors</li> </ul>
Critical Thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Is aware of Infection Prevention and Control (IP&amp;C) resources, including access to the Service Delivery Organization's IP&amp;C manuals or websites</li> <li>✓ Understands how and when to contact the Infection Control Associate or Professional for their facility or area</li> <li>✓ Is aware of disease protocols and alerts and implements them appropriately as directed by Infection Prevention and Control (e.g., gastroenteritis, severe respiratory illnesses)</li> <li>✓ Is aware of disease protocols and alerts and implements them appropriately as directed by Infection Prevention and Control (e.g., gastroenteritis, severe respiratory illnesses)</li> <li>✓ Demonstrates problem solving and critical thinking skills when presented with situations involving infectious agents</li> <li>✓ Demonstrates work practices that reduce risk of transmitting infection (e.g., immunization, staying home when ill, consistent application of Routine Practices and acceptable levels of hand hygiene compliance)</li> <li>✓ Is aware construction and renovation in patient care areas poses an infectious risk to the patients and staff and notifies the Infection Control Associate or Professional appropriately</li> </ul>

*Adapted from IPAC Canada (2016), Infection Prevention and Control Core Competencies for Health Care Workers: A Consensus Document.*