

Dear Medical Learner,

Re: Housing in Rural Communities

We hope that you have been enjoying the first few months of the 2020-21 academic year. It's an exciting time for you, but one that can also see some new concerns and challenges raised, particularly around housing accommodations, as you begin your rural rotations. We know that this year, housing accommodations have been of particular concern to both yourselves and everyone here at the University of Calgary, University of Alberta and Rural Health Professions Action Plan (RhPAP), as we try to ensure you have access to great learning opportunities and safe accommodations. We would like to take this opportunity to outline the types of housing offered in our rural communities and identify ways we are working to keep you safe during these unprecedented times.

The rural offices at UofC (Distributed Learning & Rural Initiatives, DLRI) and UofA (Office of Rural and Regional Health, ORRH) work closely with RhPAP to secure housing for your rural rotations and have harmonized housing policies. Housing is provided for learners like yourself to support your educational experience through continuity of community and is through a shared housing model. Due to the lack of availability in our rural communities, it is expected that accommodations will be shared with other learners. The exceptions to this are learners in the longitudinal clerkships and Rural/Calgary Family Medicine residency where learners are situated in their communities for an extended period of time (i.e.: 4 months or longer). We also work with learners to allow their partner and/or family to join them on their rotations wherever possible.

As housing units are limited in rural areas we would like to emphasize the importance of ensuring that your rural placements have been vetted through your university's rural medical education office. If your placement has not been approved by your program and university's rural office, we will not be able to ensure that accommodations are available for your rotation.

There have been many questions raised around the shared accommodation model and the requirement for self-isolation due to Covid-19 exposure. To ensure the safety of you and your community of practice, we are strongly encouraging all learners to consider the option of asymptomatic Covid testing prior to starting their rotation in a new community.

In the meantime, we have ensured that all shared and private housing units are thoroughly cleaned prior to each rotation. In following with AHS Health and Safety Guidelines, the accommodations' surfaces should be disinfected at the beginning and end of the stay for a one week rotation and surfaces must be disinfected 1 additional time for a two week rotation, this must be done by the learners. If you are going to be in the same space with your fellow learner for a long period of time and are unable to practice physical distancing, we encourage you to wear a non-medical mask.

If there is a need for self-isolation of one learner in a shared accommodation, please consider the following before deciding which step to take:

1. Self-isolation is triggered by close contact of verified COVID patient, or potential COVID, or because they start developing symptoms.
 - The best practice is to send the self-isolating learner back home for the duration of the isolation since sharing a bathroom/kitchen is not recommended.
 - If there is no permanent home for the learner to return to, or the learner does not feel safe to return back home for the duration of the isolation, we ask that you contact both the rural office and PGME or UME office (depending on learner type) to arrange for a room/accommodation in a hotel for the duration of the isolation.
 - **Please Note: PGME can provide funds for alternate housing through a generous donation from the Arthur J.E. Child Foundation. Please see attached information.**
2. If the self-isolating learner starts to develop symptoms before they can exit the accommodation (due to late notification of potential exposure and then develops symptoms) then both learners in the shared accommodation site will be required to self-isolate.

We encourage you to connect with your Program or Site Director(s) and respective rural offices, should you have any questions or concerns.

Reference:

UofC/UofA Combined Housing [Policy](#)
Official Guide to Self-Isolation <https://www.alberta.ca/isolation.aspx#toc-5>

Sincerely,



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