



## MEMORANDUM

To: All Employees of OPTIONS NORTHWEST

From: Anna-Marie Eckensweiler, Executive Director on behalf of Pandemic Team

Date: December 15, 2020

Re: Updates on PPE, Visits, Training, and Travel

**Please put in COVID-19 binders**

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Good day

As per our November 30<sup>th</sup> memo, we implemented some temporary directives as the numbers of COVID-19 cases were increasing in our community. We indicated we would review in 2 weeks on Dec. 14<sup>th</sup>. The Pandemic Committee met, and the following are our continued directives with respect to a number of issues.

- **PPE:** We issued communication on Dec. 10<sup>th</sup> with respect to goggles and face shields. You must be wearing either a face shield or goggles with a face mask at all times when working in congregate settings. We have provided reminder sheets on proper applying and taking off of PPE. If you are having any issues in this area, please speak to your supervisor for further guidance. Lilly Gifkins and Suzanne Fiorito are also available should you need any help in this area. We are awaiting further messaging on this from the Ministry however this directive of enhanced precautions with the face shields/goggles is a necessary requirement.
- **Visits with Family:** All non-essential and designated indoor visits remain prohibited in the group home environments. **Due to it being Christmas, short indoor visits will be allowed at the 95 North Cumberland Street office provided employees from the home are available for the supervision of the visit at the office.** The supervisor would have to ensure the training rooms are available for the visit. Employees accompanying the person supported are responsible for screening of the family member as well as cleaning of the area after the visit. These can happen starting immediately up to December 24<sup>th</sup> when the office is open or otherwise arranged with the supervisors. We are encouraging when weather permits, outdoor visits, visits through a window/door, virtual visits and by telephone. Unfortunately, individuals going home to visit for Christmas are not being allowed at this time. The only exception for indoor visits in the group homes are when someone is at end of life/palliative or very ill. Those situations will be specifically addressed by the supervisor in that area.
- **Travel:** We continue to follow the recommendations by the Thunder Bay District Health Unit. OPTIONS is directing anyone who travels for either essential or non-essential reasons to quarantine for a 14-day period prior to returning to work. Travel is defined by the Health Unit as outside of Northwestern Ontario. Our screening sheets reflect this, and employees would be responsible for the 14-day quarantine on their own should they chose to travel.
- **Training:** All in person training will continue to be on hold unless the training is specific to an end of life/palliative plan or due to pain for someone who is very ill. Area orientation may occur at the supervisors' discretion where staffing is required.

- **Groceries:** Online purchasing of groceries is available through coordination with the supervisors.
- **Stay Home:** As per our policy, stay home if you have symptoms. Do the self-assessment of your symptoms and report to your supervisor to determine if a COVID-19 test is required.
- **Face to Face for other services:** Where office employees and CRT clinicians are able, engage in more virtual support meetings as opposed to Face-to-Face contact.
- **Personal lives:** We continue to ask everyone to be vigilant in their personal lives as what we do at home affects our co-workers and the people we support. You have done an amazing job in this regard, but we know that the Christmas season may pose some temptations as we all want to be with our families. While the restrictions for numbers in our own homes is currently limited to 10, the Public Health Unit posted the following.

**All Ontarians are advised to only come in close contact with people living in their own household and to maintain 2 metres of physical distance from everyone else. Individuals who live alone may consider having close contact with another household.**

It is due to this messaging that we continue to restrict visits with family and ask that everyone be diligent over the Christmas season. We know this is tough on not only the people we support and their families but all of us. These decisions have been made to keep everyone's safety first in our minds. **Your efforts have made a difference; know that and know that it has been appreciated.**

We have no new information to share on the EMS testing. They have had their hands full with the recent outbreaks in the community however we are still reaching out to them on this issue. We also have had minimal information on the wage enhancement funding other than yesterday we were told our application had been approved. We are now awaiting further direction on when we can pay this funding out. Please note we are not in receipt of the funding just an email from our funder advising of the approval.

As always if you have any questions regarding anything contained in these communications, feel free to reach out to your supervisor, management team or pandemic committee. We will review all of these directives after Christmas on January 4<sup>th</sup>.

The Emergency orders have been extended until January 20, 2021 therefore we don't expect a lot of changes to occur until our local number of cases stabilizes.

Thank you for your efforts on OPTIONS behalf. May you and your families have a safe and Merry Christmas.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'A. Kelly', written in a cursive style.