



MEMORANDUM

To: All Employees of OPTIONS NORTHWEST

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

Date: February 18, 2021(#6)

Re: New directives for Thunder Bay; code **Red**
Keeping Ontario safe and open
Please put in COVID-19 binders.

Good day all!

As you have probably already heard, the government has lifted some of the restrictions from the original lock down order. As of 12:01 am February 16th, 2021, Thunder Bay is considered in the **Red zone**. There is an extensive document put out by Ontario.ca about the zones and the restrictions that apply. These can also be found in their entirety on the Thunder Bay District Health's website. Different areas in Ontario have been classified in different zones based on their community's current positive COVID-19 outbreaks. For the purpose of messaging for our agency, we are providing an overview of some things that affect us directly and things we have chosen from direction from our Ministry to relay to you. For a full picture of all the COVID-19 response framework, please go to <https://www.ontario.ca/page/covid-19-response-framework-keeping-ontario-safe-and-open>

The **Red zone** is a level down from Lock down so there are still a lot of controls in place to keep the community safe. Organized public events and social gatherings are restricted **to 5 people indoors** and **25 people outdoors**. Limits are in place for religious services such as weddings and funerals where physical distancing can be maintained; 30% capacity of the room indoors and 100 people outdoors. While restaurants and sports facilities will be re-opening as well as retail, there are limits for all on the gathering sizes and the restrictions in place. While these are the provisions under the guidelines for the **Red zone**, our ministry still wishes to keep things as safe as possible for people in congregate living.

Given that the Thunder Bay area is still experiencing outbreaks, we are continuing to maintain our position that **no indoor or outdoor visits** will occur until we are in a zone that is less restrictive. We deemed at the beginning of the pandemic, that our homes were too small for in-person visits in the locations. At this time, the only change to visits

is that **we will allow** people supported to go for a short walk with family members provided face masks and social distancing would be respected. As we have previously messaged, someone who is deemed palliative or end of life would be given consideration for visits.

Our Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services has now indicated **that all visitors regardless of type are to wear a surgical mask and eye protection in congregate living**. This means that the plumber who fixes the taps or toilet, or Motions Thunder Bay who comes in to assess a piece of equipment must wear a **mask and eye protection**. If they do not have them upon arrival, we must provide them upon entry. We want to ensure that anyone, including employees entering the homes, can access the screening sheets/masks/shields or goggles/thermometer at the entrance of the home. We know some have been able to achieve this while others have it in the office etc. due to space. We will work with you to get hanging folders in place to ensure everything is accessible at the entrance. No one should be entering locations without their masks and face shield. We have also made it mandatory **for anyone having face to face contact outside of congregate living to ensure masks and face shields/goggles are worn. This would pertain to our clinicians, SIL employees, administrative employees where direct contact is being done.**

The Ministry has also clarified, that “at all times” for mask and eye protection, includes travelling in a vehicle for work purposes. The driver should use personal judgement and remove eye protection only when driving if it creates a safety hazard.

Its also imperative that employees stagger their meal breaks and NOT eat together especially in congregate living areas. The only times the removal of masks and eye protection are allowed is during mealtimes, alone outside or alone in an office. It is important to socially distance when consuming meals when more than 1 employee is working to mitigate any risks when PPE is not worn.

We are continuing to put a hold on student placements. As you know, we are always looking to the future to recruit new employees and students require placements to gain experience. Until we are feeling things are more stable in our community, this will remain on hold.

Our Ministry has continued to message the following: ***“while direct interactions connected to the workplace and congregate care settings are key, what we do in our personal lives also contributes directly to infection risks in those settings. All Ontarians including staff of congregate care settings MUST adhere strictly to practices in their personal life that help stop the spread of COVID-19.”***

While our community slowly starts to open, we continue to keep fairly strict adherence to the parameters we set out prior to Christmas. If you have any questions about any of the directives to date, please do not hesitate to contact your immediate supervisor or another member of the Pandemic or management team. We have also updated the Service update as well.

We thank you for your efforts to mitigate the risk of COVID-19. Every little bit helps.....we have seen that over the last year. And while this has been a trying year for all of us, your continued commitment to your work has helped see us through this pandemic. 😊

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Eckensweiler', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Anna-Marie Eckensweiler