



On behalf of the Pandemic and Management Teams, after one long year of battling COVID-19, we want you to know how much we appreciate YOU. Thank you for all that you have done and while there is still more to do, we know your efforts have kept the people we support and yourselves safe.

MEMORANDUM

To: All Employees of OPTIONS NORTHWEST

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

Date: March 12th, 2021(#8)

Re: Thank YOU!! and some Reminders 😊

Good day everyone!

Just when we thought spring was around the corner.....March always hits us with some fresh snow. Just wanted to communicate a few things out to you during this heightened time of COVID-19 in our community. While the overall news for Thunder Bay continues to be concerning, we are still feeling that all of our efforts are keeping the people we support and our employees safe. This past week our local public health unit

provided a video that Suzanne Fiorito shared with all. Essentially the message was to assume **every encounter** you have with someone that they may be positive with COVID-19. This messaging is not provided to scare you but to bring awareness to all of our actions when encountering another person. If you treat them as if they have the virus, you become more aware of your mask, your hand washing, your ability to social distance etc. It appears our community is experiencing COVID-19 in all areas so this awareness just reminds us to be more hyper-vigilant in all our encounters. It has also touched us as an organization. Daily we are learning of close encounters that people associated with OPTIONS have experienced with COVID-19 and some who have tested positive, but all our efforts have kept you out of harms way. None of these close calls were from work related exposures and the ones we did experience have been contained or resolved.

We want to remind everyone that if you are not feeling well or experiencing even one symptom, to do the self-assessment as you may require a COVID test. Don't just assume your runny nose is from seasonal allergies... we want to hear from you if you are feeling ill. We have been very pro-active this last year in this symptom management approach and to our credit, it has benefited us. Please review the symptom list attached and if you are feeling unwell, speak to your supervisor.

If there is anytime that we need to be careful in all our actions, **it is now!** While the uncertainty of the virus hit us a year ago, the lock downs of all services kept things in check for the City. With more stores open during this lock down and restrictions not quite as they were the first time, your diligence in your own life and when conducting work for OPTIONS is even more important now to mitigate risk.

We recognize that our agency has essentially been locked down for a year.....the stress of this on our employees and the people we support is not easy. All of the wonderful things we took for granted have changed immensely this past year and we still recommend that people we support are not frequenting public places like the mall or other stores. Yet even with all that we have had to adjust to, our employees working direct face to face are now in the queue for the vaccines and in general our country is receiving more vaccines. This is finally some light at the end of a very long tunnel.

The snow will melt and the spring like temperatures will re-appear. There will still be some tough days ahead but if we all do our part, we can look forward to some sunnier days this summer.

If you have any questions about any aspects of our mitigation strategies, please do not hesitate to contact your immediate supervisor or another member of the Pandemic or management teams. Remember your masks, eye coverings, hand washing, hygiene etiquette.....**Stay positive but test negative.** 😊



Taken from the Thunder District Health Unit website. March 12, 2021

If the person self-isolating has symptoms:

At this time, siblings, parents/caregivers and other persons in the household of **symptomatic individuals** must self-isolate until the symptomatic individual receives a negative COVID-19 test result or an alternative diagnosis by a health care professional. If the symptomatic individual does not get tested, all household contacts must self-isolate for 14 days from their last contact with the symptomatic person. If they are in contact with them every day, the self-isolation period for household members is 14 days from when symptoms started to appear in the unwell person.

If anyone develops symptoms, they must self-isolate and get tested.

This guidance may change under certain circumstances. TBDHU will provide further instructions as necessary.

If the person self-isolating does not have symptoms:

At this time, if any person in your household is considered a high-risk contact of someone who has COVID-19, any children in the household must NOT attend child care or school (including post-secondary), or extracurricular activities in-person during the risk period. Parents and caregivers should work with their child's school to determine alternative learning options. NOTE: that this is NOT in the Ontario screening tool and must be considered separately. For details, see the [February 21, 2021 COVID-19 Letter to Parents/Caregivers](#).

Parents/caregivers and other persons in the household of high-risk contacts **who do not have symptoms** must **stay home except for essential reasons**, for the duration of the contact's isolation period.

Essential reasons could include going to work and going out for essential errands such as groceries, attending medical appointments or picking up prescriptions. It is important to:

- Stay home as much as possible.
- Limit contact with others.

- Work from home, if possible.
- Consider using online grocery ordering services, food delivery, or having someone drop off groceries and other essential items to your home.
- Do not visit others and do not have visitors in your home.
- Keep a minimum 2 metre distance from anyone outside your household.
- Continue to follow all infection prevention measures.

This direction does not apply to those who have:

- been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19.
- had a high-risk exposure to COVID-19 in the last 14 days.
- been advised to self-isolate by the Thunder Bay District Health Unit.
- returned from travel outside Canada in the last 14 days who are required to [self-isolate](#) under the federal Quarantine Act.
- those who are **household members** of someone who has **returned from travel** outside of Northwestern Ontario who **has/develops symptoms** of COVID-19 (even if they have not traveled and do not have symptoms themselves).

If anyone in the household develops symptoms, the whole household must [self-isolate](#) and the symptomatic individual should get [tested](#).

This guidance may change under certain circumstances. TBDHU will provide further instructions as necessary.