

COVID-19: UPDATE ON OUR SERVICES OPTIONS NORTHWEST

Service Update #14, 2021

OPTIONS NORTHWEST continues to alter services to protect public health and safety amid COVID-19.

Effective June 30, 2021

Provincial Emergency Order

For COVID-19 binders and please post in a prominent place in the homes.

The health and safety of the people we support, and our employees remain our priority as we continue to monitor the COVID-19 situation and find the best and safest way to provide services.

Overview of recent orders.....

Based on assessed level of risk to the health and safety of persons served and/or employees, OPTIONS NORTHWEST reserves the right to introduce heightened pandemic precautions (beyond the guidelines provided by MCCSS, Public Health, and other government and health authorities), and/or to temporarily pause or revert to an earlier stage in provincial re-opening guidelines, and to apply either approach across one or more operating areas, or to apply in a site-specific manner.

Like all Ontarians, we are following advice from local, provincial, and national health authorities to help stop the spread of the disease. The province will be entering phase II of the COVID-19 Roadmap to Reopen Ontario on June 30, 2021. In addition, OPTIONS NORTHWEST is continuing with the following to mitigate risk:

- OPTIONS NORTHWEST administrative sites continue to be **closed** to the general public. Altered services are available from each site, during our regular hours of operation from 8am to 12:00 and 1:00 to 4:00. OPTIONS NORTHWEST is continuing to operate all programs however our approach has been modified to mitigate risk. Please call 807-344-4994 for further information about programs and services available at this time. There is an automated telephone attendant when an administrative member is not at their desk. Please follow the prompts to leave a message and your call will be returned.
- All administrative and CRT employees will be accessible via phone, video conferencing and face to face interaction depending on the circumstances. Face to face interaction in other programs except congregate care, will only be for situations that are deemed best practice.
- Effective May 22, 2021, walks with family/friends (maximum 4) from the group home are allowed.
- Effective May 25, 2021, Group Home backyard visits will be permitted: Visits may include up to four (4) visitors; Outdoor visitors will be screened prior to entering backyard; outdoor visitors must always wear a surgical/procedure mask and eye protection; visits will be scheduled in advanced, supervised, and not exceed 60 minutes; and other Group Home individuals will be encouraged not to enter the backyard to allow their roommate uninterrupted time with their visitors. If there were special

circumstances these limits could be reviewed and approved in advance by the Pandemic Team eg, Birthday of the individual.

- The Community Service division (group home, SIL, HS, CPW) is happy to announce the resumption of activities within the community as outlined by Provincial guidelines <http://tbchamber.ca/steptwo-reopen-june-30/>. The Pandemic Team is now encouraging individuals to re-engage in the community and participate or visit any public activities (indoor or outdoor) as per the guidelines put out by Public Health.
- Please note, while attending community activities and or supporting individuals in the community, staff continue to follow regular safety protocols and adhere to the use of PPE throughout the duration of the activities. While in the community, individuals should be encouraged to wear masks and frequent hand hygiene throughout the activity.
- Group homes will see an increase in visits from Vendors, Contractors and other third party supports that had previously been restricted to visits that addressed Health and Safety only.
- Community Resource Team along with other members of the administrative departments will also increase the frequency of visits to resume services to the individuals in all areas of the Community Services division.
- Effective June 10, 2021, Brief Physical Contact with visitors; and Recreational Activities (non-essential short-stay absences) for individuals outside of the Group Home, will be permitted:
 - Brief physical contact with visitors:
 - Individuals and visitors, regardless of vaccination status, are permitted to engage in brief physical contact (e.g., a hug) during outdoor visits. This includes essential and non-essential visitors.
 - The requirement for visitors to wear eye protection and surgical/procedure mask always remains in place.
 - Despite masking exemptions, where feasible, individuals are strongly encouraged to wear a surgical/procedure mask as well.
 - Non-essential visitors must maintain physical distance (2 metres/6 feet) before and after physical contact.
 - Recreational Activities (Short Stay Absences):
 - Individuals are permitted to leave the congregate living setting for a short stay (i.e., same day) absence in the community.
 - This will now include recreational outings (activities for pleasure) in addition to essential absences (e.g., work, school, medical appointment, physical exercise).
- All employees must wear both a surgical/procedural mask AND a face shield or goggles while working within the congregate care setting or doing face to face interactions in the community. The only exception to this is during employee mealtimes when the employee is eating and strictly maintaining social distancing. Your additional training on PPE should now be completed. Please ensure your PPE is stored properly in bags provided when you are eating and not left on counters, tables, or other surfaces. Audits will also be done as recommended by Public Health Unit.
- Employees working in administrative offices must always wear a face mask in public areas of the buildings and if engaging with another person in their own office. The only time a face mask is not required, is when working alone in your own office. Social distancing in meeting rooms/offices is required and strictly enforced and sharing a space to have lunch together is not recommended at this time. Employees accessing the buildings after hours or on weekends are required to wear masks and properly screen including temperature taking. Cloth masks are not recommended for office use. Surgical masks are available at the entrance of both buildings.

- All employees/essential visitors will be screened for symptoms and taking of temperatures as they attend any OPTIONS NORTHWEST location. All essential visitors must wear both a surgical mask and face shield or goggles when entering a congregate setting. We must provide them upon entry to the home. Visitors MUST complete the screening questions or access should be denied.
- Going for a walk with an employee, is NOT cancelled.
- Doing in home activities is NOT cancelled.
- Anyone who travels **outside Ontario**, for either essential or non-essential reasons, **must self-isolate for 14 days when returning to Ontario** (*Please ensure your unpaid leave of absence is pre-approved by your immediate supervisor*).
- Anyone who travels **within Ontario**, **must self-monitor for 14 days when returning to Thunder Bay**.
- To reduce anxiety, do not ignore your feelings, remain calm and seek assistance if you are feeling overwhelmed. You can reach the Employee Assistance Program at **1-877-371-9978**.
- Seek information from reliable news sources only.
- Reminder to use precautions as outlined by Health Canada – Wear a mask, wash your hands, cover your mouth during coughs and sneezes, stay home if you are sick. Get vaccinated. Vaccines are only one method to mitigate risk.....we still need to be vigilant with our PPE use and all of our other precautions.
- Self-care is critical as worries worsen if we are not looking out for ourselves.
- OPTIONS NORTHWEST Pandemic team meets regularly to address any new announcements, provide updates and to ensure adequate supplies/other necessities are in place.

We are doing everything possible currently to keep safe options available to support people in need of care. We will continue to monitor all the developments of COVID-19 and will continue to inform you of further changes to our services. If you have any questions or concerns, please call 807-344-4994 or email general@optionsnorthwest.com.

On behalf of the Pandemic Team, stay healthy and safe !!!

Thank You!!!!