

# COVID-19: UPDATE ON OUR SERVICES OPTIONS NORTHWEST

Service Update #17, 2021

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

**Effective July 29, 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.
- 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 may choose not to mask if all parties are fully vaccinated; 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 e.g., Birthday of the individual.

- **Effective July 30, 2021, Scheduled and unsupervised indoor visits will resume with the following procedures in place:**
  - **Active screening of all visitors upon arrival, with policies and protocols in place to admit entry to those who pass the screening.**
  - **Proper respiratory etiquette and frequent hand hygiene.**
  - **Education on all required protocols will be provided by the site.**
  - **There is adequate staffing to implement visitation protocols and continue ongoing operations within the setting.**
  - **Environmental cleaning and disinfection of the visitation space(s) (including washrooms) will occur following recommended IPAC standards.**
  - **Where appropriate, the group home is able to facilitate visits in a manner aligned with physical distancing protocols, including identifying a space(s) where visiting takes place and the areas that are off-limits (e.g. common areas, etc.) and the maximum capacity limit based on ability to physically distance within a designated space.**
- 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.
    - 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).
  - Effective July 23, 2021, individuals from Group Homes will be permitted to attend essential overnight visits with family.
    - Upon return, the only restriction is that individuals that have been fully vaccinated must pass an active screening questionnaire that screens for

signs and symptoms of any potential exposures to COVID-19. If a resident does not pass screening, the site will follow isolation policies.

- Upon return from an overnight visit, individuals who are not fully immunized must follow additional precautions until they receive a negative result on a COVID-19 test or 14 days has passed. If the resident does not pass screening, the site will follow isolation policies.
- 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 exceptions are:
  - During employee mealtimes when the employee is eating and strictly maintaining social distancing.
  - Face shield or goggles may be removed when not providing direct care to individuals and 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.
- **Temperatures and wellness checks on individuals in group homes will be done once daily.**
- Employees working in administrative offices must always wear a face mask in public **and common** areas of the buildings. **Employees have a choice to remove their mask when meeting or working together in an office or meeting room, provided that you can maintain a physical distance of 2 metres from each other at ALL times.**
- **Please print the “Masking Required” sign and have it posted at your office entrance if you would like co-workers to wear a mask when entering your office.**
- ~~and if engaging with another person in their own office.~~ The only **other** 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 a surgical mask when entering a congregate setting and must wear eye protection when providing direct care. 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.
- Traveling within Canada: No travel restrictions.
- Traveling outside of Canada: Travel restrictions - You must be cleared by ArriveCAN when returning to Canada (<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19/arrivecan.html>). If you are not cleared by ArriveCAN, you must self-isolate for 14 days.
- Please follow the Travel Guidance provided by Public Health Unit (<https://www.tbdhu.com/travel>).
- 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](mailto:general@optionsnorthwest.com).

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

***Thank You!!!!***