



MEMORANDUM

To: All Employees of OPTIONS NORTHWEST
From: Anna-Marie Eckensweiler, Executive Director on behalf of the Pandemic Committee
Date: October 30th, 2020
Re: Travel Restrictions Effective November 1, 2020 /Christmas inquiries

Please put in the COVID-19 binders.

Good day everyone

The Pandemic committee has been keeping a close eye on our COVID-19 situation locally as well as what has been happening across the province and the country. Thunder Bay's numbers while not as bad as hot spots in other parts of Ontario, have seen some positive cases here in town and they are related to travel.

As an organization trying to mitigate risk of the virus for ONW settings but especially the very vulnerable in congregate care settings, we are now **implementing restrictions for travel** for all employees. While the Thunder Bay District Health Unit has put out recommendations, OPTIONS NORTHWEST like other groups in Thunder Bay will **require employees choosing to travel for essential or non-essential reasons to quarantine upon return to Thunder Bay and remain off work without compensation for this period. Providing a negative COVID test result upon return will allow employees to return to work prior to the 14-day quarantine.** While we know this may impact some personal plans for Christmas, we felt this was a necessary step to continue to mitigate risk not only for the people we support but fellow colleagues we work with.

The following are the recommendations from the Thunder Bay District Health Unit if you must travel for "essential" reasons (i.e. medical reasons)

TBDHU recommends avoiding all non-essential travel outside of Northern

Ontario.(Northern Ontario is considered Parry Sound to the Manitoba border) Anyone with travel plans for the fall should decide if travel is necessary, and consider rescheduling and/or alternatives to attending in-person.

If travel is necessary, be aware of the COVID-19 situation in the area you plan to visit. Take extra care to reduce your risk of getting COVID-19 while away by following all [public health recommendations](#).

- **While away, it is strongly recommended that you:**
 - avoid social gatherings;
 - avoid close contact with anyone outside of your household; and
 - have a plan in case you develop COVID-19 [symptoms](#) while away and need to isolate and seek testing immediately.
- **Upon return, it is strongly recommended that you:**
 - stay home as much as possible for 14 days;
 - avoid close contact with anyone outside of your household;
 - avoid social gatherings;
 - take extra vigilance in following all [public health recommendations](#) in case you were exposed to COVID-19 during travel; and
 - monitor your health for [symptoms](#) for 14 days and if symptoms develop, or you are informed that you may have been exposed to COVID-19, immediately [self-isolate](#) and follow the instructions on the [TBDHU website](#) to access testing.

We have also been asked about Christmas visits for individuals supported and what will happen during that time. As you know with COVID-19, things can change daily therefore, trying to predict exactly what will happen in December is like looking through a crystal ball at this stage of the planning. We were able to maintain visits at Thanksgiving as Thunder Bay's situation was relatively stable and numbers were not concerning to the point of having to cancel plans. We will be monitoring this up until the week of Christmas to ensure visits do not pose any further exposure for those supported. We recognize Christmas is a special time for individuals to visit with their families; it is not our intention to keep people apart. Our primary concern is the health and well being of the people we support and OPTIONS employees. We will do what we can to ensure Christmas is still a special time for people.

Thank you for your continued efforts and support of OPTIONS NORTHWEST.



Anna-Marie Eckensweiler