

# COVID-19 Town Hall Q&A



November 3, 2020

**QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:**

*(Please note: the information in this document is accurate as of Friday, November 6, 2020.)*

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**HUMAN RESOURCES**

**Wondering if Island Health will be providing CRA Tax Form T2200 to contract staff who have been and/or are currently working remotely from home?**

*Please see information about the T2200 tax form in the [Working From Home FAQs](#) - questions 19 & 20.*

**Provincially agreed upon "Work from Home" guidelines were promised for Nov 1. Are they posted?**

*The Working From Home intranet page is available [here](#). It is also available from the [COVID-19](#) intranet page - HR section.*

**Will there be remote work guidelines established for HEU and HSA teams, like N/C? There are a lot of non-clinical teams working remotely in their roles. AND When will work from home guidelines be available for members who are part of a collective agreement (Health Sciences Professionals)? AND Will there be more departments capitalizing on remote work opportunities for positions that can be successfully completed remotely?**

*HR will be looking at extending the policy in the New Year to contract positions - taking into considerations the learnings from our experience with non-contract staff.*

**The messaging is confusing: continue working from home if you have been doing so - OR - negotiate with your manager - which one is it, and why say both?**

*If you are working from home because of the pandemic but wish to return to the office when it is safe to do so, review WFH materials with your manager to ensure you are meeting safety and information and*

*privacy requirements. If you are working from home and wish to continue to do so permanently, review WFH materials with your manager to see if a WFH agreement is an option.*

**Regarding WFH, some leaders say they personally feel their non-essential admin staff need to be in the office daily. Personal feelings must be set aside for logic.**

*The Working from Home Policy needs to be applied fairly and consistently across the organization. Leaders should consider each WFH request they receive, and must be able to clearly explain why a request is denied. Not all jobs can be done from home, and operational requirements mean some employees who would rather Work from Home will need to work in the office. Employees must be performing satisfactorily before a Working from Home agreement can be reached, and must maintain their performance while working from home. Open, ongoing communication about job performance, individual and team goals, workplace environment, scheduling changes, training and technology are key. HR will be monitoring Working from Home requests that are denied.*

**Will Island Health be asking non-essential staff to stay home if/when case counts get worse? If so, what would be the point you would make that call?**

*The Pandemic executive meet on a daily basis, and with EOCs and teams throughout the week, to monitor the impacts across the health authority. We are constantly weighing whether we need to step into bigger restrictions or ease off. As these decisions are made, staff will be informed.*

## **PUBLIC HEALTH/MEDICAL HEALTH OFFICER**

**Will there be a more of a detailed dashboard for Vancouver Island that specifies in more detail by city the COVID case counts and active cases?**

*The Public Health COVID-19 Status Dashboard is updated on a weekly basis and provides a breakdown of cases by region (South/Centre/North). There is currently no plan in place to start reporting at a community-level, unless it is to provide information related to a community outbreak or exposure. For the public report, please [click here](#).*

**What is the status of flu vaccines - my parents are trying to get one but there are no spots in the island health clinics until the end of November.**

*There was a very positive responses to the flu clinics when they started and the appointment slots filled up very quickly. There should be adequate vaccine for everyone who wants it, but some people may not receive it until later in December or early January. You can also get your flu shot from a pharmacist (for ages 2 and up), physician or nurse practitioner. Please visit the [public website](#) for more information on where to get a flu vaccine.*

**With numbers rising should we be bracing for more restrictions?**

*Currently our case counts on the Island remain fairly low in comparison to what is happening in other parts of the Province. At this stage we have not received any indication that restrictions will be put into*

*place; however it is important for the population to comply with the recent updates to the Gatherings and Event order that the Provincial Health Officer has put into place, and ensure we are following COVID precautions such as social distancing and wearing masks in public places.*

### **Do we have a contact tracing app yet?**

*No. We've looked at many options, but currently our contact tracing methods are working well and at this time, we will not be implementing an app.*

### **Casual workers waiting for COVID test/results have any compensation as they have no sick days? Lots of people can't afford taking a week off work without pay.**

*As of November 5<sup>th</sup>, the testing process (from initial call to confirmed test results) is happening within 48 hours. Individuals who receive a negative test can return to work as long as symptoms are resolved (without the use of fever-reducing medication). If you have a residual cough, you can return to work and a mask should be worn during the shift. If you are experiencing gastrointestinal illness (nausea, diarrhea, fever, vomiting, malaise) please stay home until you are 48 hours symptom-free.*

*Regarding compensation, sick bank would be utilized for sick days off. There may be federal EI benefits for those that require time off work for medical reasons.*

### **Can the swab test differentiate between COVID and the 'regular seasonal flu'?**

*Individuals in hospital will be testing for COVID-19, influenza and other respiratory illnesses; however, the COVID-19 test currently only tests for COVID, not for the seasonal flu.*

### **What specific plans does Island Health have to make winter testing safe for nurses? Much of BC/Canada is indoors. Island Health need to make this #1 priority.**

*This has been identified as priority work within the Testing and Collection work stream and work is already underway to address inclement weather and optimize testing sites for winter weather. There are two main streams of work – one is a short-term strategy to optimize PPE at collection sites to ensure our staff and patients are properly protected. We are currently determining supply and availability of options, and then will move to testing them later this week with OHS and IPC. The second longer-term strategy involves working with FMO and other partners to determine the best model and solution (i.e. hard structure or indoors) for each collection site.*

### **A Canadian working in the US wants to come home for Christmas. If they receive a negative test upon arrival, do they still need to quarantine for 2 weeks?**

*All Individuals returning from International travel (including the US) are still required to Quarantine upon their arrival, unless they are exempt. For more information on Travel and the federal quarantine act, [click here](#).*

**Upon return from outside Canada can we return to work before the 14 days if we test negative?**

**Would a test be available for an essential worker?**

*All Individuals returning from International travel (including the US) are still required to Quarantine upon their arrival, unless they are exempt. Currently testing is only available for symptomatic individuals, therefore an asymptomatic essential worker who is returning from international travel would not receive a test. For more information on Travel and the federal quarantine act, [click here](#).*

**If Health care workers have airline tickets to travel outside of Canada for vacation are we allowed to travel outside of Canada? Do we need to isolate on return?**

*Non-essential travel is still being discouraged for BC residents, as per Phase 3 of the BC Restart Plan. All Individuals returning from International travel (including the US) are still required to Quarantine upon their arrival. For more information on Travel and the federal quarantine act, [click here](#).*

**When you use the term “recovered” how would you define that? There is lots of data coming in on long hauler symptoms and multi organ long-term involvement.**

*Those who get diagnosed with COVID-19 are considered infectious and will need to self-isolate for a minimum of 10 days from when their symptoms started and when fever is gone without the use of fever-reducing medications (e.g. Tylenol, Advil), and the person is feeling better (e.g. improvement in runny nose, sore throat, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, fatigue).*

*The incubation period for COVID-19 is up to 14 days from when a person is first exposed until symptoms appear. For more information about COVID-19, please visit the [BCCDC website](#).*

## **INFECTION PREVENTION & CONTROL/PPE**

**It is Dr. Bonny Henry's expectation that masks are worn consistently in all indoor public spaces. Does this include our health care facilities and offices?**

*The BCCDC has published a [new provincial policy on mask use in health care facilities](#) that makes it mandatory for patients and visitors to wear a medical mask in a health care facility, with masks provided by the health authority. The policy is now in effect, however, we are still sorting out implementation and compliance measures across all of our sites. It is important to remember that masks are one part of the hierarchy of infection prevention and exposure control measures for COVID-19. As such, masks should continue to supplement other measures on the hierarchy including physical distancing, cleaning and disinfection, staying home when sick, and good hand hygiene.*

*There will be further communication to clarify and support implementation of this new policy over the coming days. While the policy makes masking mandatory in health care facilities and any locations where health care services are provided, it does allow for some exceptions. To this end, we must remember that we do not know everyone's story. There may be reasons why someone is unable to wear a mask. Please continue to practice compassion, patience and understanding. If you have questions about masking, please email [pandemic@viha.ca](mailto:pandemic@viha.ca)*

**We are too busy with patients to contact JOSH about colleagues not wearing masks properly. Policy enforcement is YOUR responsibility. AND Who is supposed to enforce mask/distancing policies in Administration? It feels like an unsafe.**

*As this has been a consistent theme at Town Halls, HR has committed to working with the Occupational Health & Safety team to develop a process for which there will be some auditing and reporting requirements for leaders to follow. Thank you for raising these concerns.*

**Why is it not mandatory for staff to wear masks (non-medical) when entering/exiting the building?**

*The BCCDC has published a [new provincial policy on mask use in health care facilities](#). The policy is now in effect, however, we are still sorting out implementation and compliance measures across all of our sites. It is important to remember that masks are one part of the hierarchy of infection prevention and exposure control measures for COVID-19. As such, masks should continue to supplement other measures on the hierarchy including physical distancing, cleaning and disinfection, staying home when sick, and good hand hygiene. There will be further communication to clarify and support implementation of this new policy over the coming days.*

## LONG-TERM CARE

**Why are we not testing individuals for COVID moving into LTC? Could this not reduce the two week isolation period?**

*The test provides a point-in-time snapshot of a person's current status, but to be absolutely confident that a person does not introduce COVID into one of our LTC facilities, we are continuing with the 2-week isolation.*

## COMMUNITY HEALTH SERVICES

**Home Support-why are families/clients not expected to wear masks and why are respites continuing while family members including out of town visitors are present? AND As a CHW I wear a mask to protect my clients. When will it be an expectation that clients and families protect us? AND As a CHW I feel unsafe and unprotected going into homes where families aren't social distancing nor wearing masks. When will we be protected?**

*Healthcare workers wear medical-grade masks to protect others - but it also protects ourselves. It is reasonable to ask families/visitors to give care providers physical distance and request they wear a mask - but we cannot mandate that within people's homes, so the best line of defense is to protect ourselves.*

**CHWs have been told we no longer need to change our shoes at client visits, can this be communicated to clients. Clients get mad and we are left to deal with it.**

*Worksafe BC discourage the use of shoe covers due to a slipping hazard risk, unless the risk to the worker is greater by not wearing them. Therefore in CHS, shoe covers are not part of the PPE kits or regular use, for staff safety reasons.*

- *Standard CHS infection prevention PPE kit contents do not contain shoe covers.*
- *Bed Bug PPE kits contain knee high covers for use in this situation.*
- *Both kits are listed [here](#) under section 5 of the Health Unit Aid Manual*

*Clients are informed on the home support onboarding that CHWs must wear shoes while providing care. It is listed on the [Home Support brochure](#).*

*Island Health does not provide funds to the CHW to provide a second pair of shoes to be used only in the home environment. The expectation is they wipe their shoes before entering the client's home.*

**CHWs who don't work AL, are we being put there to fill hours in our schedule? Seems to defeat the purpose of 1 site. Clients upset they can't see loved ones.**

*The Single Site order and visitor restrictions are determined provincially. The single site order permits a CHW to work in Community and one designated AL site at one time. Having an available CHW to work in a designated AL site is beneficial to meeting client care.*

**Why are Community Health Workers going to training or non-essential meetings that do not have social distancing in place?**

*When social distancing is not possible and an essential in-person meeting is required, wearing a medical grade mask is expected and an acceptable practice as deemed by WorkSafe. If you have specific concerns, please bring this up to your supervisor.*

## **OPERATIONS & SUPPORT**

**How do I get access to an Island Health Zoom account? Many people prefer Zoom functionality over WebEx and Skype.**

*Island Health offers Zoom accounts. Go to the IM/IT's [Collaboration Tools page](#) for information and to put in a request. You will be contacted to determine what the needs are and options may be discussed.*

**When will we go back to paid parking at the hospitals? There are no spots available due to staff parking from 8 - 4 Mon-Fri. The impact on patients is negative.**

*The Province of BC suspended all parking fees at health-care facilities to support the COVID-19 pandemic response back in April. The decision to reverse this practice will be determined and announced by the Province.*

**Why are classes being held in small, non ventilated rooms with inappropriate distancing/class size, when the content of the meeting could be done at home?**

*Education sessions are a component of our work duties and the same safety precautions that have been instituted to support the [COVID-19 Recovery Planning for Safety](#), such as limiting group size, allowing for spacing and providing PPE if spacing cannot be maintained, need to be applied to any educational events. There may be sound rationale for requiring an education session to be conducted in person but COVID safety sense needs to be applied.*

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*If you observe situations that do not appear to align with those safety precautions please connect with the session organizer to discuss your concerns. If the issues/concerns are not resolved, then consider connecting with JOHS regarding your workplace safety concern.*

*If you are an educator looking for guidance on how to support formal learning needs, please review the [Education Delivery IPC Considerations](#) memo.*