

COVID-19 Town Hall Q&A



September 22, 2020

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:

This document is accurate as of Wednesday, September 30, 2020.

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

HUMAN RESOURCES 1

PUBLIC HEALTH/MEDICAL HEALTH OFFICER 2

INFECTION PREVENTION & CONTROL/PPE 3

LONG-TERM CARE 4

CLINICAL SERVICE DELIVERY 4

OPERATIONS & SUPPORT 5

HUMAN RESOURCES

When will we get paid for pandemic pay?

The [BC website](#) was updated September 16th with the following information: Eligible employees will begin to see temporary pandemic pay reflected on their paycheques in October.

Are non-clinical, non-contract, non-management employees eligible for pandemic pay?

Yes.

What education and training funding is available for us staff to be retrained to fit the current need in the organization?

If there are roles that employees are interested in engaging in training opportunities on (for example RN looking to become Critical Care RN), please reach out to your leader to discuss what options may be available with organizational support.

What was the process for determining what staff could work from home? **AND Should Allied Health employees (e.g. dieticians, pharmacists) continue to do their clinical work on the units or should they be encouraged to work remotely?**

If your leader has said 'continue to work at home' - please do so. Staff who are asked to return is due to a decision of their leader, based on operational priorities. Please have a conversation with your leader if you require more clarity.

Who decides if a staff can continue working remotely from home or needs to be working at their worksite? **AND For non-clinical staff working remotely, when will the option to make their remote work location a permanent change for their positions become available? **AND** Do we purchase our own furniture when working at home?**

HR is in the final stages of confirming the policy/procedure around Working from Home, and that will take effect November 1st. It will details the resources that island Health will provide and what the employee needs to provide.

Why are new staff being hired instead of re-training or redeploying those of us that are being underutilized and on 'pause'?

Please send an email to victoria.schmid@viha.ca because we have work for you. There is no shortage of work. If you have capacity we will ensure you are able to participate.

What is Island Health's plan to address staffing issues when flu season and COVID collide?

There is a high demand for staffing throughout Island Health and our people resources continue to be a challenge. HR and operations teams are working closely on this to determine priority needs and planning for seasonal surge. We ask all staff to take the appropriate COVID-safety measures and get a flu shot to maintain your health through the fall.

PUBLIC HEALTH/MEDICAL HEALTH OFFICER

Is there a date available when flu shots will become available and how will immunization clinics work?

The public and staff immunization campaigns will launch on October 19th. More information and details will be shared in the near future.

Why isn't the gargle test for COVID-19 being extended to adults?

The option to move away from the NP swabs to gargle testing for adults, as well as children, will depend on the availability of the actual supply of gargle tests. There is no set date for this transition.

What can you share in terms of what the realistic timeline for COVID vaccine availability in BC, and any update on clinical trials in Canada?

150 countries have signed on to finding an effective vaccine. This is a 'novel' virus, which makes it challenging to identify the right portion of the virus to stimulate an antibody response. There is much work happening - but scientific methods must be followed. We need to develop a product that does work. Noteworthy developments will be shared as known.

COVID phone lines are still extremely busy for community. Could some of this move online, ex health care workers, to off-load phone lines?

Island Health has set up a callback option that people can sign up for online or via text (see [info here](#)) and we continue to focus on increasing our staffing resources. Other viable options are also being explored and we look forward to improved services in the near future.

Will Island Health be providing direction to schools/childcare providers regarding yesterdays MOH amendment to symptom checklist for children?

Yes. Island Health Medical Health Officers and public health staff are actively working with schools and daycares to ensure the guidelines are clear.

Can you comment on people spitting in the street in relation to COVID? I see this quite often.

COVID-19 is transmitted through liquid droplets when a person coughs, sneezes or talks/yells/sings and can certainly be transmitted by spitting if the liquid droplets get into the eyes, nose or throat of an individual. Spitting in the street or during a run or other physical activities is highly discouraged. The regular public health advice applies to maintain physical distancing and appropriate hand hygiene.

Can childcare/school/out-of-school care refuse to take asymptomatic children if their family member is waiting for a test result?

All childcare facilities should have sick/illness policies which address how symptomatic children are received or excluded from care. Asymptomatic children can attend childcare facilities even when a family member has symptoms. Positive test results will be handled by the Public Health team and contact tracing will occur. If the family member tests positive the child will be excluded from care. Licensees are encouraged not to create policies which place undue burden on parents or children in care. Schools may have different policies/guidelines and the current K-12 guidelines are [found here](#). Read [more here](#).

Do we need to let school/childcare know that a family member is being tested for COVID?

No. Individuals do not need to let school/childcare know that a family member is being tested for COVID-19. Asymptomatic children can attend childcare settings and do not need to stay home unless they develop symptoms or have a family member who has tested positive for COVID-19. Individuals should follow the direction from 811/their health care provider.

Plastic shopping bags are being banned in some areas, but aren't they more sanitary than reusable cloth bags?

There are currently no COVID-19 related recommendations against the use of either plastic or reusable cloth bags. Some stores have implemented policies to restrict the use of reusable bags, based on what works for them and their employees. In some cases customers may be requested to pack their own groceries if reusable bags are allowed. If the employee handles the reusable bag, it is recommended that they practice frequent hand washing. Similarly, the BCCDC recommends that cloth bags be washed regularly.

INFECTION PREVENTION & CONTROL/PPE

Why are so many employees STILL NOT wearing masks? I do not feel safe at work, and feel the culture is one of indifference.

At Island Health, there an expectation that staff and medical staff wear a mask when they are within 2-meters of any patient/client/resident, and when unable to physically distance from others in the work

place. It is the responsibility of leaders to ensure these practices are maintained in all care areas. Please speak with your leader if you are uncomfortable raising your concerns with colleagues.

Some people do not dry their hands after washing them. Isn't it true that drying after washing reduces contaminants?

Why dry your hands?

- *Drying hands helps to remove some leftover bacteria in water droplets on hands, especially from fingertips. It also helps to remove transient microorganisms by rubbing them off*
- *Damp hands can lead to skin irritation and increase the spread of bacteria*
- *Drying hands makes it easier to put on gloves. Wet hands can cause gloves to catch on the skin, causing the gloves themselves to tear and/or skin irritation*
- *Rubbing hands on scrubs to dry them is NOT effective as it re-contaminates the hands*

If rubbing hands dry is irritating, try:

- *Patting hands dry instead of rubbing*
- *Using ABHR as often as possible*

LONG-TERM CARE

Is there any information on when the next Long-Term Care Town Hall meeting will be held?

We intend to offer a virtual Town Hall for LTC families but have not yet set a date. We are also considering an Island Health-wide Town Hall for LTC staff.

With the flu season coming up and the rising cases of COVID provincially do you expect there to be a full return to the single site order for LTC? If so when?

The single site order is in place and remains in effect for LTC and Assisted Living sites.

CLINICAL SERVICE DELIVERY

Are the unit clerks supposed to still be applying identification bracelets to patients in our ambulatory clinics?

ID bracelets are mandatory for inpatient, daycare, and Emergency visits (in acute care) but not mandatory in all ambulatory clinics. However, ambulatory clinics that were applying ID bands pre-COVID are still required to do so today using appropriate PPE and safety measures (e.g.: from behind a protective barrier, using good hand hygiene, wearing a mask if unable to maintain 2-metres or no protective barrier is in place).

ED continues extreme volumes day after day of non-urgent ER patients, putting staff and other patients at risk. What are you doing to keep staff and patients safe as C-19 numbers rise?

ED volumes are sitting slightly below normal, and below normal for admission levels from EDs. Some EDs are holding more patients, which is higher than we want to be. Our full COVID response plans are in place at all EDs across the island and include strategies to employ should we have a positive case. We're reconfirmed our co-horting sites at RJH, CVH, and NRGH. We've re-engaged with site leadership and

physicians around processes around positive cases and co-horting. Lots of ongoing work with primary care practitioners. EDs doing work to have separate zoning for respiratory and non-respiratory clients. COVID assessment centres are also working to ensure access to primary care for people who have COVID symptoms and need care, but don't need to an ED.

Is there any TV & radio campaigns to redirect non urgent pts away from the ER & to virtual & walk-in clinics or urgent care centres to take burden off the ED?

A 'Right Care Right Place Right Time' campaign launched in the Cowichan Valley. It includes three videos showing how and when to use GP/NP offices, urgent care clinics and ED. The [videos](#) and [poster](#) are available online. EDs in other geographies are also looking at customizing it in their areas. If your team is interested in pursuing a similar campaign, contact Andrew.Leyne@viha.ca.

OPERATIONS & SUPPORT

Climate change is still happening, what is the health authority doing to mitigate the increased use of single use PPE & huge amount of garbage it's creating?

Island Health's priority is to make sure that staff and patients have the PPE needed to stay safe and prevent the spread of COVID-19. Scarcity of some PPE items during the pandemic has also led to innovation and the exploration of alternatives to single use items. Reusable gowns are now in use in many areas, and continue to be rolled out. Island Health has also introduced reusable respirators, face shields and other items to ensure our staff have the personal protective equipment they need, and which also takes a step toward reduction of single use items in our system.

Why is View Royal Surgical (private for-profit) seeking PPE from Island Health?

The View Royal Surgical Centre supports Island Health's surgical program. We support them with PPE for Island Health related procedures only. Programs and services outside the health authorities are generally responsible for procuring their own PPE; however, under the guidance of the Ministry of Health, PHSA and the health authorities have provided limited support for the broader health system to ensure continued, safe provision of services and to prevent the spread of COVID-19 when certain items have not been available through regular supply lines.

The PPE in Community is plastic. Wearing this for an hour with the temperature set high in a senior's home is difficult, I am soaked when I take it off.

Increased demand for PPE during the pandemic has led to interruptions in global supply chains. At time this has limited the availability of certain items, and led PHSA and Island Health to obtain alternative products. While these products may not be those we are used to or prefer, they are tested to ensure that they meet the required standards to keep staff and patients safe. Anyone experiencing a concern with a product is welcome to provide feedback using PHSA's product concern form.

Is Island Health considering restricting visitors due to the uptick in cases overall?

The essential visitor policy is mandated across the province by the Ministry of Health. There are no plans in place at this time to change this policy.