

March 16, 2020

## **COVID-19 – Family Update and FAQ’s**

### **Moving Forward in a Pandemic World**

Dear Family Members,

Since our last notice, both Canada and British Columbia have taken bold steps to prevent or slow down, the spread of the COVID-19 Pandemic. For the first time in most of our lives, we are being asked to stay home. Large scale community events are being cancelled, Spring Break travel plans scuttled, and we are advised to stock up on a couple of weeks-worth of medicine and food.

Although our risk level in BC is still low, we need to take immediate steps to ‘flatten the curve’ and ensure it stays that way. We would like to assure you that we are doing just that, so that we can continue to provide you and your relatives with the services you count on. We also need your help. One day, we hope to look back on this period of time as one of “over-preparedness,” resulting in a quick cessation of the Pandemic.

Last week, we activated a Pandemic Response Committee, whose responsibility is to ensure effective implementation of our Pandemic Plan. We are providing teams with the information, tools and resources they need to do their jobs safely, minimizing the risk of transmitting illness. This Committee will keep our stakeholders informed too.

The most important thing that you can do to help us now, is to continue:

- washing your hands often with soap and water (for at least 20 seconds);
- covering your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing;
- refraining from touching your face;
- avoiding others who are unwell;
- avoiding usual greetings like handshakes, hugs and kisses;
- staying home when you’re sick;
- reporting respiratory flu-like symptoms to your doctor.

We have prepared a Frequently Asked Questions document with more information below, and invite you to contact a supervisor if you have any questions or concerns that you’d like us to address.

With best wishes to you and your family,

Fernando Coelho, CEO  
**posAbilities**

### **FAQ: COVID-19 Guide for Families**

March 16, 2020 at 3:00 pm

#### **Stopping the Spread**

At this time, the risk level for Covid-19 in BC is still considered to be low. However, we all need know how to spot illness, get help, and prevent more infection. Please see some general and program specific questions and answers below.

#### **Question 1. What do I do if I suspect my family member has COVID-19?**

If someone has flu like symptoms such as fever, coughing and difficulty breathing, they should stay home and away from others. Call 811 at any time to speak with a registered nurse. (People who are deaf and hearing impaired, call: 711).

Additionally, if the person has been in contact with someone who may have the COVID-19 virus, call your health care practitioner for guidance.

A person who is not showing symptoms, is not considered to be contagious. Please continue with handwashing for at least 20 seconds, not touching your face and all other precautions that you can take at home to stay healthy for yourself and your loved ones.

**Question 2. Who do I contact if I am concerned about exposure to illness in a service provided by posAbilities?**

The health and safety of your family and our employees is our number one priority. Please contact a supervisor with any concerns you have.

If there is a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 in one of our programs or services, we will be co-operating with health authorities to provide them with the information they need during an investigation.

This is a very fluid time, with information being updated often, and we will do our best to keep you informed.

**Question 3. Where can I turn for trusted information?**

Our team relies on BC's public health experts to provide us with direction based on facts. You can find regular updates from these web sites:

[All Regional Health Authorities](#)  
[Public Health Officer](#) and Ministry of Health statements  
[HealthLink BC](#)  
[Public Health Agency of Canada](#)  
[World Health Organization](#)

**Community Inclusion Services**

**Question 4. What kinds of Community Inclusion activities are safe to participate in?**

For individuals with fragile health, avoid high traffic areas such as shopping centres, grocery stores, athletic venues, or community centres. In essence, anywhere where there is normally some crowding, and the virus could be spread in droplets by coughing/sneezing, or on hard surfaces like shopping cart handles, or sports equipment like bowling balls. The Office of the Provincial Health Officer has tips for individuals who have a chronic condition or have a [compromised immune system](#).

When you are in public spaces, please try to keep about 1 metre (3 feet) apart from the closest person.

General information about risk levels for different scenarios, and whether to stay home or away from others is available online, at [BC Centre for Disease Control](https://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/covid-19).

## **Outreach Services**

### **Question 5. Are any of posAbilities' outreach services cancelled?**

Yes, there are some cancellations to initiatives like Supported Living Network's Buddy Club, and Community Kitchen.

In addition, our Community Inclusion services are not currently inviting outside groups into the programs - as a precaution. For example, gatherings such as Knitting Club, and a growing number of other activities will be cancelled until further notice.

### **Question 6. Will I/my family member still receive services from our Behaviour Consultant?**

Yes, we are providing behaviour consultation to individuals and families who receive services in their home. Our employees will ask you a few screening questions before entering your home to confirm that it is safe for them to work with you there.

You may want to make arrangements with your consultant to meet by phone or video conference. You can expect some disruption to meetings that involve multiple parties such as school and ministry staff.

If you have registered for any small group social or life skills trainings that are being postponed, you will be contacted directly.

## **Residential Services**

### **Question 7. Is it okay for family members or friends to visit the program/group home?**

We have developed a short screening protocol to ensure safe and most welcome visits from families and friends. We will be asking you:

1. Have you travelled outside of Canada within the past 14 days? (If so, you cannot enter the program.)
2. Do you have a fever?
3. Do you have a cough?
4. Do you have an unusual shortness of breath?

Answering yes to questions 2, 3 or 4, means you cannot visit at this time.

We will also ask you to wash your hands as soon as you enter our site, and to practice all of the usual precautions for preventing the spread of illness. If you feel unwell, please do not come.

**Question 8. Will my family member's supported living staff continue to visit them?**

Yes, and our employees will ask them a few screening questions before entering their home to confirm that it is safe for them to work there. They may also suggest meeting by phone or video conference.

They can expect some disruption to meetings that involve external parties.

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*posAbilities'* Pandemic Response Committee will release updates weekly, or as needed.