

May 22, 2020

## **Pandemic Response Committee Update for All Stakeholders**

*BC's Gradual Re-Opening Begins, Great Gains Made for People with Disabilities*

Hello Everyone,

It's week nine, and we have had no COVID-19 outbreaks at *posAbilities* thanks to your collective efforts to stay safe! When I say this, it is always a cause for celebration, and we continue to be grateful for all that you do to ensure we can safely deliver services. I would like to update you on some significant developments over the past week:

- a policy change allows in-person support to individuals with disabilities who are in the hospital;
- an update on planning for safe and fulfilling Community Inclusion day services;
- the Government of BC announces a temporary pandemic pay program for individuals working the front line in our sector.

I would also like to share the launch of our new Pandemic Learning Project with you.

### **Ariis's Law – Families Comforted on Hospital Support Policy Change**

Thanks to the diligent work of disability advocates, BC Minister of Health Adrian Dix announced a significant revision to "essential visitor" policy during the pandemic. The policy ([read it here](#)) now recognizes that it is essential for patients with disabilities to have access to a person who can support them emotionally, assist with their communication and in decision-making. In addition, BC announced that citizens can [temporarily suspend in-person execution requirements](#) for wills and personal planning instruments, including representation agreements and enduring powers of attorney. To learn more about how to prepare for a hospital stay if needed, see: [Vela – Support in Hospitals](#) and [Nidus – Representation Agreements and Legal Planning Documents](#).

### **Planning for the Gradual Re-Opening of Society Continues....**

Our teams continue to plan for the gradual resumption of community-based inclusion services. How we operate in the future will be guided by directives from the Provincial Health Officer, WorkSafe BC, and Community Living BC. Each body will let us know what we need to do to create the safest service delivery systems possible. Over the past few weeks, we have also been contacting all individuals, families and caregivers on their preferences, so that we can continue to be person-centred as we move forward.

Once we have our new safety protocols in place, and with your guidance to build on, we will be able to finalize our plans, which we anticipate will be in mid-June. These plans will be shared, so that we can talk about changes, and answer your questions. Look for new policies and procedures that may impact your participation. For example, physical distancing and what to do when feeling unwell. We will also provide clarity on the use of masks in our workplace, which differs from public health advice for community use. Look forward to these updates at the end of May, and contact us if you need more information.

### **Temporary Pandemic Pay Program for Essential Service Workers in Community Living**

Another significant announcement this week was about the temporary pandemic pay program for front line workers. We will be issuing a memo on how this applies to *posAbilities'* employees separately, as there are specific parameters for this. In short, we are very supportive of government's recognition of the essential support workers in Community Living.

### **Pandemic Learning – Share Your Experience with Us!**

In closing, we have learned so much to date, and we would greatly appreciate you taking a few minutes of your time to share how COVID-19 has affected you. Our goal is to help the disability sector do a better job at responding to future crises. Please see the attached poster for more information, and visit us online at [www.posAbilities.ca/Pandemic-Learning](http://www.posAbilities.ca/Pandemic-Learning) to participate.

If you're looking for some fun events this week, or to support other charitable work in our sector, we have some ideas! Visit @posAbilitiesCA on Facebook or Instagram to learn more.

With best wishes for a relaxing and enjoyable weekend,



Fernando Coelho, CEO  
*posAbilities*