

May 29, 2020

COVID-19 Stakeholder Update | Planning Continues for Service Changes as Society Opens Up

Hello everyone,

As BC residents gradually resume some of their favourite activities, it gives me great pleasure to report that we remain healthy and strong, as we have no incidences of COVID-19 to report. I remain grateful for each of you, and your efforts to keep the curve flattened. Please know that if needed, persons with disabilities and essential service workers will be prioritized for testing.

In today's update, we will share:

1. **Hospital Visitor Policy** - Amended to better serve persons with disabilities
2. **Expectations** - As we gradually introduce service changes
3. **Transportation** - [Translink](#) safety practices
4. **Employment Support**
5. **National Accessibility Week** - Read our [blog](#) and discover virtual events and activities!

Hospital Visitor Policy Amended to Better Serve Persons with Disabilities

Dr. Behn-Smith and Shane Simpson, the Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction, offered their thanks and appreciation for the important work that the self-advocates and families undertook to improve the Hospital Visitor policy, so that persons with disabilities would have the emotional, communication and decision making supports they require in person. [Click here](#) for details on the policy, and to learn how best to prepare for a hospital visit.

Gradually Introducing Service Changes

The Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction (MSDPR) and Community Living BC (CLBC) hosted two teleconferences this week, which included the deputy public health officer from the Public Health Office. The calls were an opportunity to inform service providers, individuals and families of how they are approaching the changes to service delivery, ensuring that they are done gradually, safely and as quickly as possible. CLBC's summary of these conversations [is here](#) and full transcripts will be available by June 4, by [clicking here](#).

At *posAbilities*, all of our managers have already been in touch with you, and our community inclusion plans are at the advanced stage of development. The next step is to present them to CLBC for review, as the plans need to be compliant with all Provincial Health and WorkSafe BC guidelines. Once approved, we can begin to implement our plans, and gradually increase the numbers of individuals participating. We are aiming for mid to late June.

Many folks we support receive services from multiple agencies, and so our efforts need to be coordinated in order to maintain health and safety. Please stay tuned for more information about the specific programs you're involved in, or contact the team leader or manager if you have any questions.

Technology and Outreach Services for Children, Youth and Adults

All services and meetings will continue to rely on the use of technology as much as possible. This includes behaviour consultation, employment, explore, community connecting and shared living. Given that we are advised to very slowly increase our personal contacts, and to maintain physical distancing, this is key. We have seen the use of our www.CoMakeDo.ca website expand exponentially, providing connection, learning opportunities, structure and joy for many whom we serve. We also believe that our comfort with technology will be helpful should we have to take a step back, depending on the course of the virus.

Transportation

Effective June 1, Translink will charge fares, and the bus pass will be reinstated if you had it previously. There is no action required on your part, unless you want a change. See this update for details on [safety protocols](#), which includes all riders wearing non-medical masks or face coverings.

Unfortunately, we don't yet have word from HandyDart as to when their regular services will resume and our employees will not be able to take over this responsibility. We will keep you posted as soon as we learn more.

Employment Support

Only three jurisdictions in Canada allow Employment Insurance benefits to be exempt from Persons with Disabilities benefits, and this will continue to be the case in BC for the time being.

For those individuals who have lost their job, CLBC will facilitate support to access WorkBC, or other employment services as needed. Employment is a strategic priority for CLBC.

National Accessibility Week

Join in the virtual celebrations and activities that showcase disability pride across the nation. Begin by checking out STILL LIFE - Kickstart Disability Arts and Culture's virtual festival! See [here](#) for details.

In closing, we hope that you find these updates informative and reassuring. We are doing all that we can to welcome everyone back to experience the connection, belonging and joy that comes from sharing experiences in person, as well as online.

Dr. Behn-Smith recently commented on the trajectory of the Coronavirus in BC, and how little we knew when we started learning about COVID-19. Now we have experience, evidence and confidence that our public health measures successfully flattened the curve. We are moving forward with our eyes wide open, and we look forward to the next phase of society's re-opening. It's time to begin enjoying (safely) the gifts of summer – sunshine, fresh air, beautiful BC's beaches, parks, and campgrounds. Let's have some campfire and patio visits, and take this opening as one that will bring us closer together.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "F. Coelho". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Fernando Coelho, CEO