

Stakeholder Update – November 2020

We are learning to live with COVID-19

Hello everyone,

As we head into the Winter season, and formally, the second wave of the pandemic, we would like to share with you our most recent service updates. In this letter, you will also find summaries and links to other information that is important to know as we travel this journey of supporting folks with developmental and intellectual disabilities. If we can leave you feeling supported, inspired and hopeful, we think it will add to our collective resilience, and make us stronger!

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1. posAbilities Health Check



Over the past month, two individuals supported by our outreach services tested positive for COVID-19. One individual lives with a caregiver supported through Shared Living, and the other person receives outreach services to maintain independent living through the Supported Living Network. These two cases resulted from community exposure, and fortunately, both individuals are now recovered from the virus.

In response to these two situations, we deployed our leadership team, employees and additional support from members of our Emergency Response Team. We are fortunate to have the human resources, personal protective equipment, and relationships needed to navigate each person's unique situation. Although it is never easy or straightforward, we learn as we move through these challenges.

A positive case or outbreak sets into motion working collaboratively with our funder, various public health officials and families. We enter into constant communication, uncover systemic gaps, and work hard to remedy them.

That is the reason you will see a link to a **Hospital Kit** in this letter and a form letter template for Caregivers. These tools and the knowledge you need to advocate for your right to support a person with disabilities in hospital or other medical settings are critical to

opening the door to timely communication and the prevention of further exposure and potential transmission.

2. Adaptations to Services



As we reported last month, we have implemented a Mandatory Mask Policy for employees working on the front lines at *posAbilities*. Although masks have always been available to our staff, we took this extra step upon seeing the trend of increasing cases of COVID-19 in the community. In combination with our employee screening tools, and other prevention measures we have in place, we are confident that we are doing our very best to create a safe and healthy environment for persons served and our employees at all of our community inclusion program sites, residential settings, and in our approach to outreach services (behaviour consultation, community connecting, employment and supported living).

Day service sites now have new and/or extended schedules, allowing for more people to participate throughout the course of a week. The sites continue to be uncrowded, offering a clean space to meet with peers and to enjoy activities. Teaching and reinforcing good hygiene continues as well.

Outreach services have resumed in-person meetings. It is important for families to know that we take precautions as Essential Service workers so that we can provide the supports that you need. Please do not hesitate to ask for more information about our pandemic safety/program re-opening plans. We are happy to share them and look forward to seeing you in-person when you feel it is safe for you/your family member to join us.

As we continue to live within a pandemic world, know that we are guided by provincial, regional and local health authorities and other related government agencies each step of the way. Although we don't plan to take a step back, we will always align our practices with advice from public health officials.

If you have any questions about our services, please reach out to the Team Leader of the program that you are connected to. For more information about the community resources below, please contact Monique Nelson by phone 778.945.3367 or email to mnelson@posAbilities.ca

3. A Message from Community Living British Columbia (CLBC)



On October 22, CLBC posted a plain language transcript of their call with Individuals and Families. [Click here](#) to read the summary. The conversation included this statement by Dr. Daniele Behn Smith, the Deputy to Dr. Bonnie Henry, our Chief Provincial Health Officer:

"COVID-19 is an established pathogen now, here to stay. We all need to find a way to care for ourselves and our loved ones through this time."

This includes working together, to ensure that you get the right services for you and your family member. CEO Ross Chilton (also a family member), speaks about identifying and managing the risks that are unique to your family, and how to move forward with service providers to get the kind of service, support and relief you need to remain healthy and strong.

4. How to Get Support in Hospitals & Health Care Settings



The BC Health Minister Adrian Dix, announced a change to the **COVID-19 Essential Visitors Policy** in May. This change allows family members, or essential support person(s) to accompany people with disabilities in hospitals and health care settings. *However, not all front line staff are aware of this.* If you need to enter the hospital and want to be fully prepared, we recommend bringing the [Essential Visitors Tool Kit \(951 KB\)](#) and asking for the triage person's manager if you are not permitted to provide support. You may have to continue to work your way up to someone who is familiar with this policy so that you can accompany the person who needs support. We can also assist you with this advocacy. *posAbilities'* Shared Living team has prepared a letter for Caregivers, verifying their role, which may also be helpful (distributed separately).

5. Financial Planning Tips and Tools



The following items may be of interest to individuals and families working on finances. Have you qualified for the [Disability Tax Credit](#)? This is a requirement to open a Registered Disability Savings Plan – [click here to learn more](#).

6. Proposed New Canadian Disability Benefit



Are you interested in joining the movement to create a new guaranteed Canada Disability Benefit? [Click here](#) to participate in a 4-part webinar series that runs throughout November!

7. Inspiration, Entertainment and Education



Watch: Watch this 5 minute video with **Al Etmanski** and learn about [The Power of Asking for Help](#)



Live Stream: [World Premiere of Zoning Out!](#) Discover the life of an Iranian newcomer, single parenting and learning about her daughter's autism. We have a limited amount of free tickets for this live stream event – contact communications@posAbilities.ca



Listen: [Podcast 'Good for All'](#): “An Innovation Mindset” & “The Artists of Inclusion”



Enjoy: [Poetry Reading](#) – ‘Haikus’, by Tara Kimberly Torme and Rachel Taylor.

8. Additional Resources



The current recommendation from health professionals is to practice physical distancing and avoid in-person gatherings. However, you can still participate in online events like live streams and webinars from home. For more virtual events, visit www.comakedo.ca.

Stay connected, stay informed!

Sign up for **Individual and Family Updates from Community Living BC** [here](#) and be sure to visit our [Community Resources](#) page and our COVID-19 page for more useful links and connections to supportive organizations across BC!

I would like to leave you with our thanks for being so supportive during this pandemic. We know it has not been easy, and we sincerely appreciate all that you do to keep yourselves, your loved ones and by extension, our team members safe.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'F. Coelho', written in a cursive style.

Fernando Coelho,
CEO