

BC's Restart Plan

June 8, 2021

Re: A time for optimism, hope and coming back together, safely

Hello everyone,

On May 25, 2021 the Province of BC launched a four-step restart plan, setting out how COVID-19 public health orders will be removed or relaxed by early Fall in: personal and organized gatherings, travel, business operations, use of offices and workspaces, and sports and exercise. This is wonderful and welcome news for us all as we head into the warmer days of summer, and celebrations like Father's Day. In this update, we will review some of the questions that are coming up as we work towards our new normal, and move forward safely, slowly and with confidence together.

We anticipate updating our COVID-19 Safety Plans by July 1, 2021. Since we have not yet received guidance on what changes can be made from Public Health Officials or WorkSafe BC, we will continue with our existing plans and share how we see them harmonizing with the restart. We are also excited by the prospect that persons served living in group homes (and many others) will have received their second dose of a COVID-19 vaccine by that time, which will be an added layer of protection for them, and all of us as we engage in some new things to do.

The progress we have made in our vaccination rates, reduced case counts and declining COVID-19 hospitalizations and deaths, are all signals that we are moving in the right direction. If any disruption occurs, we've been advised that it may slow down our progress through the steps (e.g., dates to move forward may be delayed), however we should not expect stricter orders. To quote Dr. Daniele Behn-Smith: "Progress may not be as quick as we anticipate, but we need to move forward."

We have come a long way, and it's important to remember where we were at the beginning of the pandemic, with an unknown virus that could infect everyone and no vaccines - to where we are today, with knowledge, vaccines and treatments available. COVID-19 is part of our vocabulary now, and soon it will be managed through Public Health, rather than temporary emergency measures. Brighter days are indeed ahead!

For more information, please contact your program leader, or contact us. We look forward to seeing you again in person soon.

Sincerely,



Vinita Prasad, Program Director



Fernando Coelho, CEO

FAQ's about BC's Restart: A plan to bring us back together

Public Health Guidance from now until July 1, at a minimum:

- **Physical distancing and masks* continue to be required in public indoor and outdoor settings.** **May change to masks being recommended, rather than required by July 1, 2021.*
- **If you or anyone in your family feels sick, stay home and get tested immediately**
- **Engage in careful social contact**

Q. Can I plan a camping trip/vacation with a person served before the 1st of July?

A. Yes, absolutely! Please coordinate with the program's Team Leader to have a conversation about safety planning, and to identify and reduce any risks related to the trip and the activities that are specific to your situation. In an abundance of caution and for the health and safety of the household (residents and staff), we require that travel takes place after a person served has received their second dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.

Q. When can a person served sleep over at their family member's house?

A. Overnight family visits can begin in July within the current Public Health Guidelines and *posAbilities'* COVID-19 Safety Plans. We require sleepovers to take place after a person served has received their second dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. We ask that everyone continue to practice the public health and safety measures in place throughout the duration of the visit (both indoors and outside).

Q. When is it safe to hug a person served, or to hold their hand?

A. Without a doubt, this has been one of the most challenging aspects of staying apart. In July, let the hugging and hand-holding begin! We ask that you wear a mask, and wash your hands before and after social contact.

Q. Can a person served come to a backyard BBQ or park to visit with our extended family?

A. Yes! With Father's Day coming up, we expect that folks will enjoy the opportunity to gather with at least 10 people (possibly up to 50 people if the province moves ahead to the next step) outdoors. We'd like to remind everyone that public health measures including physical distancing and wearing masks are still in place. To keep things safe, we suggest planning how you will arrange for the distribution of food and beverages, as well as safe

socializing ahead of time. For tips on [safer social interactions](#) and [safer celebrations](#) please visit the BC Centre for Disease Control's website or contact us.

Q. When will staff be able to participate in family visits without Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) on?

A. There are two parts to this question! First, employees must wear PPE when providing personal care. However, once the Public Health Order for mandatory mask wearing is lifted, it will be up to the employee to determine if and when they wish to wear PPE when performing other duties. Everyone has a right to a safe work environment, and to choose how they wish to protect themselves.

Q. What kinds of picnics and outdoor gatherings will *pos*Abilities be hosting this summer?

A. We are waiting for further guidance before planning large outdoor gatherings like our annual picnic with all programs, or multiple programs coming together for a picnic. Arranging for safe food and beverage distribution and physical distancing could be very challenging. However, we encourage all programs to plan their own events in their backyards or parks **within the existing guidelines.**

Q. What are our options for in-person staff and family meetings?

A. Both indoor and outdoor organized meetings can occur, providing all safety protocols are in place. The group size and opportunity to physically distance will be determining factors for the options for particular program sites. Please share your preference with a Team Leader, and we will do our best to accommodate it.

Q. When will Special Olympics or other sporting activities resume to an in-person format?

A. Special Olympics BC's Return to Sport approach will remain slow, careful, and focused on the safety of all their members. The organization has plans that will come into effect when we move to Step 2 of BC's Restart Plan. Read their blog post for full details [here](#) and check back for updates on their website as they begin to open up programs with group size limits and in accordance with all current public health measures in the coming weeks. They also have an email for questions: covid@specialolympics.bc.ca

In addition, local parks and recreation teams across BC are adjusting their plans and bringing back programs to community centres near you!

We will continue to feature new opportunities as they arise on our social media channels, our website, our intranet and weekly employee e-news.