

memo



To:	Agency-Wide/NACL Board of Directors
From:	Graham Morry, Executive Director
Date:	March 25, 2020
Re:	CORONAVIRUS/COVID-19 UPDATE

Hi everyone – I would like to start by conveying how proud and appreciative we are for how everybody has responded to this current crisis. Our staff have consistently stepped up to offer assistance, wherever or whenever required. There is an inherent understanding that we support in many cases the most vulnerable of our citizens, and our unwavering support is essential to their well-being.

Current Situation

We continue to monitor the number of COVID-19 cases on Vancouver Island on a daily basis. There are currently 47 known cases of the virus on the Island, as of the latest report.

At this point, NACL is not limiting its staff to one program, nor is NACL putting restrictions on staff who work for other organizations. There has been no formal directive from the Health Authorities on this matter, and our stakeholders (Community Living British Columbia, the BCCEO Network, the Community Social Service Employers Association) are addressing Health on our behalf with our concerns for effective service delivery (should these restrictions become a formal recommendation). In the meantime, our existing scheduling practices remain in effect; any changes will be communicated formally through me.

Working from Home

One critical component of risk mitigation specifically concerning transmission of disease is minimizing human contact. That is exceedingly difficult in the work that we do, given the high level of personal contact involved in our services. That said, we have an obligation to examine all of our positions to see what we can do differently, to be as effective while minimizing contact.

The plain truth of the matter is that many of these positions that can be conducted nearly as efficiently remotely are administrative. These work-from-home procedures may also apply to unionized positions such as Employment and Community Inclusion services, as they endeavour to support people via an individualized yet remote approach.

I want to be clear that we are all with you, whether it be keeping the agency running smoothly administratively, or directly beside you providing front-line service.

Staffed Residential

Homes are currently running smoothly, with pandemic protocols in place. Managers are working on contingency plans to identify critical staffing levels in the event of widespread infection, so we can direct staff accordingly. Medical supplies are actively being sourced;

but we currently have 2,000 masks (with more coming), 1,000 gowns coming, and 30 face shields on the way. We will continue to order supplies as we can, to keep people as safe as we can. Some folks are self-isolating due to individual circumstances, but these numbers are manageable at this point.

Home Share

Our Home Share Managers are keeping in regular contact with all service providers, and providing whatever supports are required on an individual basis.

Employment Services

NACL Employment Services is still operational; but due to the closure of many businesses, their focus has shifted to one of remotely supporting people and catching up on documentation. If necessary, these employees will be redeployed to other programs.

Community Inclusion

The folks at Actions Day Program have gotten very creative in providing only those services decided essential to individual well-being.

Payroll Loans

It is not anticipated that we will be laying any staff off, so people will be kept working unless ill. In the event that banks are exhausted or non-existent, we are offering the following:

Staff who are self-isolating may be eligible for 14 days paid LOA, as long as all necessary conditions are met. The **COVID-19 Self-Assessment and Isolation Procedure for Paid LOA** is attached to this memo.

On a case-by-case basis, we will consider interest-free payroll loans to be paid back over time. At this time, we have not received any assurance that external monies will be available; so, will be accessing internal monies to ensure none of our staff are in crisis. People choosing not work will be encouraged to access EI via the Government of Canada link:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/services/benefits/ei.html>

In Conclusion...

I would once again like to thank you for all that you do, and remind you that we are with you. As always, feel free to call me anytime.

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Self-Assessment and Isolation Procedure for Paid LOA

Staff who “self-isolate” due to exhibiting signs of COVID-19 may be able to receive up to fourteen (14) days of paid leave, if certain requirements are met. These requirements are:

- Be exhibiting symptoms of illness;
- Based on those symptoms, complete the online self-assessment tool (link below);
- Get approval from a medical professional (Doctor, 8-1-1 Nurse, Provincial Medical Health Officer); and
- Provide their appropriate NACL Manager with a declaration of direction to self-isolate.

The link to the Self-Assessment is here:

<https://bc.thrive.health/covid19>

Approval from a medical professional can come in the form of:

- Any form of written communication (e-mail, note, fax, letter); and
- Verbal confirmation.

For verbal confirmation, the employee will need to provide their declaration to self-isolate with the **date the leave is to be effective**, and the **name and source of the medical professional**.

Sample Self-Declaration to Take Leave for Self-Isolation:

“I, Jane Doe, declare that I have completed the self-assessment for COVID-19, and have been directed to take leave from John Doe of the BC Nurses Hotline for ____ days, beginning March 25, 2020.”

Note that the self-declaration and potential paid leave cannot exceed fourteen (14) days.

Self-declarations can be submitted to the manager via e-mail, text message, fax, or letter.

Once approved, staff will be granted a paid LOA for the timeframe stipulated, not to exceed fourteen (14) days. For casual employees, paid leave will be calculated based on the shifts accepted for the approved leave period.

Staff who become ill during their self-isolation period will need to communicate this to their manager, and (where available/applicable) can use sick-time credits for the balance of the leave.

Staff are also responsible for getting approval from a medical professional to return to work upon completion of their leave for self-isolation (the same guidelines for approval to take leaves apply for returning, including a self-declaration (if necessary)).

Sample Self-Declaration to Return from Leave for Self-Isolation:

"I, Jane Doe, declare that I have been approved by Jane Doe of the BC Nurses Hotline to return to work, effective April 8, 2020."

Who Does Not Meet the Requirements for Paid LOA Under the COVID-19 Self-Isolation Guidelines?

- Staff who do not meet the criteria for self-isolation per the assessment;
- Staff who do not provide a self-declaration as outlined above; and/or
- Staff who are taking leave to protect themselves or others in their home who have existing health concerns.

For staff wanting to protect family/loved ones from the risk of COVID-19, **compassionate unpaid leaves** can be granted per the guidelines in the Collective Agreement.

Staff wanting to protect themselves due to health concerns may:

- Use their sick banks;
- Apply for Employment Insurance Benefits; and/or
- Request a pay advance from NACL.