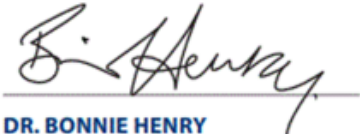




COVID-19 RETURN -TO-WORK PLANNING GUIDE

WE HAVE UNITED IN A SINGULAR PURPOSE – to flatten our curve. Now, we have reached an important milestone with our COVID-19 pandemic in BC: we are at the end of our beginning.

COVID-19 and the risks to our province are far from gone, but we can now begin to chart our path forward.



DR. BONNIE HENRY
Provincial Health Officer

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INTRODUCTION

Many of you have been operating as essential service providers from the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic and you have made the necessary adjustments and taken the appropriate precautions to be able to operate in a 'new normal'. Many other businesses, along with schools and public facilities, however, have not.

As we enter Phase 2 of BC's Restart Plan, it is important to recognize that reopening of previously shuttered businesses and public facilities, will produce an uptick in the mobility of the general population, including the tenants in your portfolio and the clients who make use of your services and supports. This increased mobility poses new and greater risks.

As Societies start to plan for the Phase 2 gradual re-opening of the economy, there are a multitude of factors to consider, some of which are unique to each particular operation; there is no one-size-fits-all approach. The focus of this next phase, like the first, must be grounded in health and safety considerations with the goal of protecting the workplace from the spread of COVID-19 now and in the future, recognizing the very real risk of a second wave if we don't get this right.

This Guide is all about keeping your workers safe. For information on keeping your buildings and residents safe, consult BC Housing's newly released [Operations Guide](#).

The Plan to Move Forward

The Province has been following the guidance of its public health experts. To this end, it has created a carefully laid out plan for BC societies to return to 'normal' activity over a prolonged period of time.

BC's RESTART PLAN

The BC Government introduced a four-phase Restart Plan on May 6, 2020. The plan carefully lays out the types of businesses that may reopen in each phase. The four phases are as follows:

PHASE ONE

This is basically where we started. This phase outlines the various services that were deemed essential to continue to operate in the early stages of the pandemic response. They include the industries identified below and extend to non-profit Societies serving vulnerable populations.

PHASE 1 (Where we are today)

Essential Services operating during COVID-19

- ▶ Essential health care and health services
- ▶ Law enforcement, public safety, first responders and emergency response personnel
- ▶ Vulnerable population service providers
- ▶ Critical infrastructure
- ▶ Food and agriculture service providers
- ▶ Transportation
- ▶ Industry and manufacturing
- ▶ Sanitation
- ▶ Communications and information technology
- ▶ Financial institutions
- ▶ Non-health essential service providers

PHASE TWO

Beginning mid-May, a number of businesses and institutions may open. For the different organizational sectors to move forward, they will be asked to develop enhanced protocols aligned with the [Public Health and Safety Guidelines](#).

PHASE 2 (Mid May Onwards)

Under enhanced protocols

- ▶ Restoration of health services
 - ▶ Re-scheduling elective surgery
 - ▶ Medically related services
 - dentistry, physiotherapy, registered massage therapy, chiropractors
 - physical therapy, speech therapy, and similar services
- ▶ Retail sector
- ▶ Hair salons/barbers/other personal service establishments
- ▶ In-person counselling
- ▶ Restaurants, cafes, pubs – with sufficient distancing measures
- ▶ Museums, art galleries, libraries
- ▶ Office-based worksites
- ▶ Recreation/sports
- ▶ Parks, beaches and outdoor spaces
- ▶ Child care

PHASE THREE

Provided transmission rates remain low, several sectors may open during the summer months. The plan also calls for K-12 education to reopen partially in June and both pre- and post-secondary classes to resume in September. Tourism, film and entertainment businesses are able to re-open during this time, but with limits to numbers and subject to COVID-19 safety protocols.

PHASE 3 (June-September, if transmission rate remains low or in decline)

Under enhanced protocols

- ▶ Hotels and resorts (June)
- ▶ Parks – broader reopening, including some overnight camping (June)
- ▶ Film industry – beginning with domestic productions (June/July)
- ▶ Select entertainment – movies and symphony, but not large concerts (July)
- ▶ Post-secondary education – with mix of online and in-class (September)
- ▶ K-12 education – partial return in June, full return in September

PHASE FOUR

The final phase of the Restart Plan has no timeline attached. It is fully conditional on there being an acceptable level of community immunity. This phase includes large gatherings associated with sports, entertainment, conventions and concerts and reopens the province to international tourism.

PHASE 4 (TBD)

Conditional on at least one of: wide vaccination; “community” immunity; broad successful treatments

- ▶ Activities requiring large gatherings, such as:
 - ▶ conventions
 - ▶ live audience professional sports
 - ▶ concerts
- ▶ International tourism



EMPLOYER PLAN FOR RETURN-TO-WORK

Pandemic Response Team

Pandemic response teams that may have been created at the outset of this crisis should remain in place as Societies evaluate and plan for re-opening. If your organization does not yet have one, now is the time to create it.

The threat of continued spread and/or a second wave of COVID-19 requires a thoughtful, deliberate approach to re-opening. Your team should plan for a measured and staged resumption of regular activity in compliance with applicable public health directives and occupational health and safety standards. (McCarthy Tetreault)

Many of the actions that your Society took in Phase One will likely continue as you move forward. The difference and larger challenge will be the greater level of mobility of residents and visitors as businesses reopen and restrictions are slowly lifted. Also, it is quite possible that, as constraints are eased, people will be less disciplined in following safe distancing rules and in observing strict personal hygiene. This reversal to ‘normalcy’ will require a heightened awareness of and greater efforts to mitigate risks posed by increased traffic in and around buildings and sites.

Your plan for resuming business activity should take all associated risks into account.

WorkSafeBC sets out five imperatives for a return to safe operation. These are summarized below:

1. ASSESS THE RISK AT YOUR WORKPLACE

COVID-19 is transmitted in several ways, including through droplets when a person coughs or sneezes, or from touching a contaminated surface before touching the face. Employers must identify areas where the risk of transmission exists.

2. IMPLEMENT MEASURES TO REDUCE THE RISK

These include measures to reduce the number of people in any one area at a time as well as efforts to ensure physical distancing. It also entails regular cleaning and sanitization of high-touch surfaces which might require erecting barriers where physical distancing is not possible.

3. DEVELOP POLICIES

- Policies should be in place that cover who can be on-site and specifically address workers, residents and others who present symptoms of COVID-19 including fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat and painful swallowing. Chart 1.a shows the symptoms associated with COVID-19 vs those presented by the flu, the common cold and seasonal allergies.
- These policies must reflect the instructions of the provincial health officer and the BC CDC requiring that these individuals self-isolate at home for a minimum of 10 days.
- Anyone who has arrived from outside of Canada, or who is a contact of a confirmed COVID-19 case, must self-isolate for 14 days and monitor for symptoms.
- Your protocols should also cover the actions that a worker should take if they start to experience symptoms including who they should notify, how they will get home and what leave is available to them.
- For anyone working alone or working from home, you will need to have procedures in place to ensure that their workplace is safe.

4. DEVELOP COMMUNICATION PLANS AND TRAINING

- It is vitally important that everyone entering your sites understands how to keep themselves safe. This extends beyond your own workforce to visitors, residents and their guests, contractors, tradespeople, and others.
- Communicate broadly and in plain language.
- Post signage in visible locations that shows occupancy limits for small spaces such as elevators and common rooms. Put up posters that outline proper hygiene practices like handwashing, covering your cough, etc. The BC CDC has ready-made posters in a number of languages on their web site at <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/clinical-resources/covid-19-care/signage-posters> for this purpose.
- Make sure that everyone is trained on and practicing these protocols and that they are fully aware of policies related to staying home when sick.

5. MONITOR YOUR WORKPLACE AND UPDATE YOUR PLANS AS NEEDED

- The people who are performing the work, particularly those on the front lines, are your best source of information about what is and isn't working. Make sure they have the ability to voice concerns and assist with finding a solution. This might entail setting new occupancy limits, posting new signage, updating policies, stepping up communications, or taking other actions.
- If you have a Joint Occupational Health and Safety (JOHS) committee (for workplaces of more than 20 employees), work with these committees and workers to resolve any identified safety issues. If not, appoint an employee rep to serve as the employees' representative.

Chart 1.a

Symptoms Chart: COVID-19 vs. Cold vs. Flu vs. Seasonal Allergies

	COVID-19 Symptoms range from mild to severe	COLD Gradual onset of symptoms	FLU Abrupt onset of symptoms	SEASONAL ALLERGIES
Incubation period	2-14 days	1-3 days	1-4 Days	Varies
Symptom onset	Gradual	7-10 days	3-7 Days	Varies
SYMPTOMS				
Fever	Common	Rare	Common	Sometimes
Fatigue	Sometimes	Sometimes	Common	Sometimes
Cough	Common (usually dry)	Mild	Common (usually dry)	Sometimes
Sneezing	No	Common	No	Sometimes
Aches and pains	Sometimes	Common	Common	No
Runny or stuffy nose	Rare	Common	Sometimes	Common
Sore throat	Sometimes	Common	Sometimes	No
Diarrhea	Rare	No	Sometimes for children	No
Headaches	Sometimes	Rare	Common	Sometimes
Shortness of breath	Sometimes	No	No	Sometimes
Itchy nose, eyes or roof of the mouth	No	No	No	Common
Watery, red or swollen eyes	No	No	No	Common

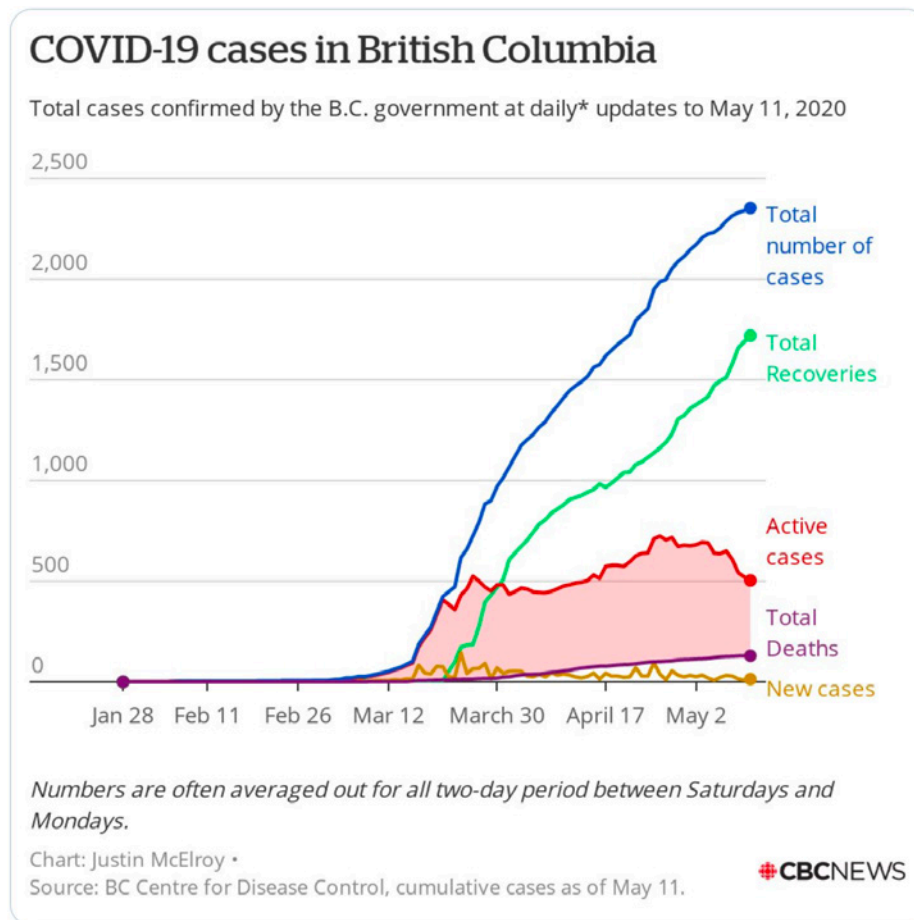
Sources: World Health Organization | Centers for Disease Control | American College of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology

WHAT TO DO TO PREPARE FOR PHASE 2

We are now at a place in BC where a certain level of activity is permitted to resume subject to safety measures and controls remaining in place. The pandemic still exists and the threat of a resurgence in the fall of 2020 is real. To prevent a return to surge levels and ensure overall health and wellbeing, businesses and institutions are instructed to undertake a risk assessment and put into effect a plan to ensure safety precautions are in place and employers and employees alike adhere to hygiene protocols and public health directives at all their places of business.

The chart below indicates the progress that BC has made in terms of reducing the incidence of COVID-19 in the province and thereby ‘flattening the curve’.

Chart 1.b Click on the link below to see updated charts.



https://twitter.com/j_mcelroy/status/1259969270877843457/photo/1

CONDUCT A COVID-19-SPECIFIC RISK ASSESSMENT

All employers are required to identify, understand and take action to mitigate the risks to workers' health and safety in the workplace. In the case of COVID-19, applying standard protocols is not enough.

The Occupational Health and Safety Regulation sets out specific risk assessment requirements including but not limited to workplace inspections and investigations.

If you have a Joint Health and Safety Committee, be sure to involve a representative in this process. If not, appoint someone from your staff. WorkSafe BC recommends involving frontline workers in this process.

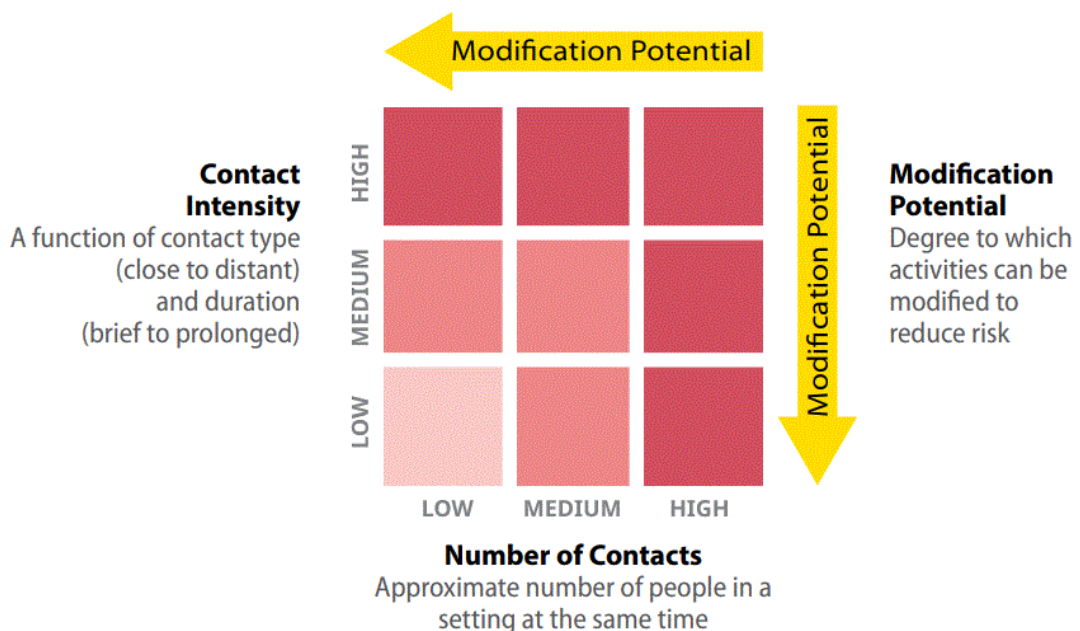
If you have multiple work locations, be sure to do a risk assessment for each location as risks may differ from place to place.

The risk assessment for COVID-19 is singularly focused in that the hazard posed is the same for all parties, i.e. the risk of contracting and spreading the virus, and the ways in which the virus is transmitted is common to all sites.

The risk of COVID-19 transmission at busy workplaces and other institutions is a direct function of two variables:

- i. **the number of contacts** (the number of people present at the same time) **and the contact intensity**
- ii. **the type of contact** (i.e. close or distant) and **the length of contact** (i.e. brief or prolonged).

These are factors we can rate as **low, medium** and **high risks**.



Bear in mind that, as the economy gradually re-opens and people start to move around more freely, any assessment you did at the start of the pandemic will need to be revisited.

Consider the following in your risk assessment:

- Where people congregate, such as break rooms, meeting rooms, amenity space, playgrounds, lunchrooms, reception areas, etc.
- The job tasks or processes that require people to come into proximity with one another.
- The materials and documents that are exchanged and the tools, machinery and equipment that people share.
- The surfaces that are touched often, such as doorknobs, elevator buttons, light switches, photocopy equipment, etc.

MINIMIZING RISK

Once you have completed the risk assessment for all your locations, determine the measures that you will put in place to reduce the risk of infection and make sure that you have adequate supplies and equipment and a plan to replenish these over the course of the next several months. Additionally, and very important, provide training to your staff.

Risk mitigation measures can be categorized as follows:

- 1. Physical Distancing Measures**
- 2. Engineering Controls**
- 3. Administrative Controls**
- 4. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

1. Physical Distancing Measures

Large numbers of people returning to a shared workplace represents a huge risk for the spreading and contracting of the virus. Managing the number of workers is critical to protecting the health and safety of employees, residents, and visitors alike. The higher the number, the higher the risk. Here are some steps you can take:

a. Allow work-at-home arrangements	Wherever possible, allow employees to work from home to reduce the number of people at the work location at any one time.
b. Remind people to avoid physical contact of any kind	Post signage and verbally remind people to avoid physical contact such as handshakes, pats on the back, hugging, etc.
c. Use floor markers for distance & direction	Affix position and directional markers on floors at reception and cash transaction areas to enforce physical distancing.
d. Limit # of passengers in a vehicle	Limit the number of passengers in a vehicle depending on size and seating. Deploy additional vehicles if necessary and require use of masks and gloves while in a vehicle.
e. Set occupancy limits for elevators & common areas	Based on square footage and a standard of 2 metres (6 feet) distance, set a minimum occupancy level for common areas and post signage to impose the limits.
f. Considerations for events and cultural gatherings	<p>Establish and widely communicate policies that inform about the need to comply with the Province's Public Health directives related to gatherings of more than 50 people. This would apply to all use of grounds, common amenity space and facilities under the employer's management.</p> <p>There is guidance available to groups that serve indigenous peoples from the First Nations Health Authority regarding cultural gatherings (e.g., sweat lodges, potlatches, ceremonies and other gatherings). See https://www.fnha.ca/about/news-and-events/news/fnha-fnhc-fnhda-advise-against-all-gatherings-to-prevent-covid-19-spreading for more information.</p>

g. Secure amenity spaces	<p>Lock and/or limit access to rooms and or areas of a site where physical distancing is difficult to maintain. This might include supply rooms, children’s playgrounds, cultural sites such as sweat lodges.</p> <p>Will all areas of the workplace be opened, or will some areas remain closed or restricted to prevent gathering, such as kitchens, cafeterias, lunchrooms, cafes, photocopy or supply rooms, patios, etc.?</p> <p>If you allow access, ensure that it is supervised and falls within the standards recommended by BC public health authorities for safe physical distancing</p>
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2. Engineering Controls

a. Install Plexiglas barriers	Install Plexiglas barriers at reception and service desks
b. Install/increase ventilation	Open windows if and use fans to increase air flow. If possible, make changes to HVAC systems to improve air circulation and ventilation.
c. Temporary fencing or barricade tape to block access	Erect physical barriers to block access and/or use of restricted areas such as playgrounds, stairways, common areas, etc.
d. Reconfigure the layout of office workstations	Move workstations to ensure a minimum 2 metre separation if possible. If this is not possible, find ways to alternate occupied workstations with vacant ones throughout the workday.
e. Physical space between seating	Remove or post signage on seating to maintain physical distance between individuals.
f. Isolation areas for clients with COVID-19 symptoms	In the case of shelters, ensure that there is an area within the space that is separated from the general population where individuals who show signs of being ill can self-isolate.

3. Administrative Controls

a. Temporary policies that stress stay at home if sick	Consider amending current sick leave policy to encourage employees to stay home if they are sick. This may mean offering additional leave deemed ‘COVID-19 Sick Leave’ and/or expanding the leave to allow for use of vacation credits or special leave days. The intent here is to add more leniency in order to protect others from being exposed to an infected worker who might otherwise feel compelled to come to work. Medical notes should not be required.
b. Sanitization of “high-touch” areas and commonly used conveniences & equipment	Regularly sanitize frequently used items and surfaces like doors, hand railings, elevator buttons, light switches, pens, keyboards, computer peripherals, etc.

c. Use of disinfectants, hand sanitizer & soap	<p>Good news! Coronaviruses are enveloped viruses. This means they are one of the easiest types of viruses to kill with the appropriate disinfectant when used according to the label directions.¹ Use regular household cleaners or diluted bleach to clean hard surfaces.</p> <p>One of the best things people can do to prevent spreading COVID-19 is to wash their hands frequently with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds. If soap is unavailable, use hand sanitizer with a minimum of 60% alcohol base.</p> <p>Again, instruction on the handling and technique for using cleaning products, soaps and sanitizers is important to effectively contain the spread of the virus.</p>
d. Signage & bulletins	<p>Signage is critical in conveying information to people who work, live in or visit your sites about your COVID-19 protocols. Use signage to instruct on how-to's (e.g. handwashing), occupancy limits, distancing precautions, etc. Similarly, bulletins are useful tools in educating workers and residents on the measures you are taking and how they are meant to prevent infection.</p>
e. Eliminate 'wait' areas, book appointments instead	<p>If your Society typically offer services to 'walk-ins', or has suppliers, deliveries and other unscheduled visitors, you will need to impose greater control on traffic in and throughout your sites. Post signage and send out notices that all visitors will require an appointment before being permitted to enter your office(s) or worksites.</p>
f. Return-to-Work Questionnaires	<p>Employers may use Return-to-Work questionnaires to ascertain whether an employee who has been on COVID-19 related leave is cleared to return to the workplace. The questions will be similar to those asked when screening visitors (see above). Answering 'yes' to any of the questions posed may require the employee to work from home or remain on lay-off until they are fully cleared to return.</p>
g. Visitor Screening	<p>Screen all visitors prior to arrival by having them respond to the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you traveled out of the country in the past 14 days? • Have you experienced fever-like symptoms such as cough or shortness of breath? • Have you recently had contact with any person(s) that is/are confirmed or suspected of having fever or flu-like symptoms? <p>If they answer 'yes' to any of the above, they would not be permitted entry.</p> <p>Note: You may post these criteria at the entrance as well.</p>

¹ <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/disinfectants/covid-19.html>

h. Worksite Visitor Logs

The ability to identify and track visitors to your office and worksites is important if the visitor encounters someone who is later found to have the virus. A Visitor log will allow you to record the visitor's name, time (date and time in and out) and purpose of visit, who they are visiting and a contact email or phone number.

If you use a physical logbook, keep in mind that you will need to disinfect the sign-in book, pens, and counter after each use.

Note: This does not apply to people visiting tenants.

i. Temperature screening

As one of the main symptoms of COVID-19 is a fever, some employers have started screening employees using touchless temperature scanners before they are permitted to enter the workplace. This type of thermal testing is non-invasive and as such, could be considered a reasonable precaution especially if there is evidence of exposure to infection at a work location, residential building, or program site.

j. Virtual meetings and electronic communications

Use technology to the extent possible to stay in contact with your employees and business contacts. Avoid in-person meetings. Use online platforms to conduct meetings and interviews.

k. Flexible policies & work arrangements

There is a broad a range of work arrangements that offer flexibility to employees in where, when and how they work. During COVID-19, such arrangements serve to reduce the number of staff in a work location at any one time; allow for commuting at off-peak hours; assist employees in meeting personal & family obligations; extend service to clients; save on office costs; and are known to keep employees engaged by supporting a balance of work and home life. Consider the following options or a combination thereof:

- i. Work from home or Telework arrangements
- ii. Compressed work week with flex day off
- iii. Staggered shifts/hours of work
- iv. Extended business hours
- v. Mobile work locations

It should be noted that such arrangements must be of mutual benefit to both employer and employee; are voluntary on the part of the employee; have written policy to support them; protect privacy and employee safety; and offer a viable means of evaluating performance. There should be start and end dates associated with them which is an important consideration over the course of the pandemic.

<p>l. Case-by-case accommodation for higher risk employees</p>	<p>COVID-19 affects people in differing ways. While there is much unknown about the virus, it is known to affect older people and those with compromised immune systems or underlying health conditions more severely than others.</p> <p>For this reason, it is important to consider each employee's unique circumstances when determining work arrangements during the pandemic. Employers may not know if a vulnerable employee is in the workplace.</p> <p>As part of workplace communications about COVID-19, employers should prompt workers with individual risk concerns to come forward. They have an obligation to disclose and you, as an employer, have an obligation to protect their health & safety while on the job.</p>
<p>m. Designate 'drop' zones</p>	<p>Designate specific areas in your workplace for third parties to deliver mail, packages and supplies thereby limiting traffic through the workplace to employees and pre-screened visitors only.</p>
<p>n. Limit unnecessary travel</p>	<p>Authorize travel for short day trips only if at all. Prohibit travel that involves spending time in large groups of people (e.g., air travel, conferences, etc.) where practicable.</p>
<p>o. Arrange for use of public transportation at off-peak times</p>	<p>Where possible, schedule shifts at off-peak hours in order that commuting staff is able to maintain physical distance from others en route to work.</p>

4. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

<p>a. Personal protective equipment (PPE)</p>	<p>By now, we should all know what PPE stands for and what it includes. PPE for the purposes of providing housing and support services includes masks, gloves, face shields, goggles and in some cases, protective clothing.</p> <p>Improper use and/or care of PPE poses additional risk that is avoidable if workers are properly trained. Not only should employers have a reliable supply of PPE on hand to make available to workers, you should ensure that workers are properly trained in how and when to use it.</p> <p>Under OHS laws, you are responsible for paying for and furnishing the PPE workers need to do their jobs. So, you cannot resume an operation unless and until you verify that you can secure an adequate supply of face masks, gloves and other essential PPE.</p> <p>To learn more about proper use of PPE, check out the BCCDC website: http://www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/clinical-resources/covid-19-care/infection-control/personal-protective-equipment</p>
<p>b. Use of non-medical masks & eye protection</p>	<p>Lower-risk jobs require only a non-medical face mask. There is a need to preserve the supply of medical N95 masks for workers in higher risk jobs (e.g. healthcare workers).</p> <p>Face shields or goggles can be used as extra protection from contracting the virus through the eyes.</p>

Work Refusals

Employers have a duty to provide a safe working environment relative to the expected duties of the employee and the risks in the workplace. The basic principle behind work refusal rights is that no employer be able to direct an employee to perform unsafe work.

The procedure for refusing unsafe work requires the employee to report the condition to their supervisor. The supervisor then immediately investigates and takes action to remedy the situation without delay. The supervisor may determine that the condition is safe and if the worker still declines the work, further investigation occurs, first internally with a Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee (JOHSC) or an employee selected by the employee's union and, if still unresolved, through a WorkSafeBC representative.

The WorkSafeBC officer may issue an inspection report or an order if they find that an undue hazard does exist, or they will advise the parties that no undue hazard is present, and the employee can safely perform the work. Pending the result of internal and external investigations, the worker is reassigned to other work with no loss of pay.² Employers need to consider the refusal on a case-by-case basis, depending on the situation.

Where COVID-19 is concerned, the issue of unsafe work is a little more complicated.

If you are doing everything you can in accordance with the Province's public health guidelines, which basically advise preventative measures such as hand, respiratory and environmental hygiene, and physical distancing, the work will likely be deemed to be safe. The recommendations suggest that these measures are generally reasonable for most workplaces.³ However, even in this scenario, an employee may still perceive a threat to their personal health and safety.

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, employers can expect to see work refusals from employees based on:

- A confirmed or presumptive case of COVID-19 in the workplace
- A confirmed case of COVID-19 in an employee's immediate family or other close contact
- The risk of potential exposure to COVID-19 from contractors, customers or clients depending on the nature of the workplace or the people it serves
- Concerns from employees who are particularly vulnerable (over age 65, compromised immune system, underlying medical condition) not wishing to report to work; or
- Employees with a generalized fear of contracting COVID-19 by travelling to or attending work.⁴

² [WorkSafeBC Refusing Unsafe Work](#)

³ [COVID-19 Workplace Frequently Asked Questions](#) Matthews Dinsdale Labour Lawyers

⁴ [COVID-19 Workplace Frequently Asked Questions](#) Matthews Dinsdale Labour Lawyers

You will need to determine a course of action on a case-by-case basis and with the advice of public health and/or medical officials. It is fair to say though, that erring on the side of caution during this pandemic is the better road to take. Accommodating an aggrieved employee by permitting them to work from home, if possible, or re-assigning them to a location and duties that pose a lower risk, are responsible measures an employer may take in these instances.

As noted earlier, you may not know who a vulnerable employee in the workplace is. As part of workplace communications about COVID-19, employers should encourage employees with individual risk concerns to raise them directly with you. Remember to only ask for the minimum information required to make an informed decision in order to protect their privacy rights.



Communications & HR Best Practices

The biggest weapon in your arsenal against COVID-19 is frequent and informative communications with your employees, residents and program clients.

Keep people up to date: The COVID-19 threat is ever-evolving and medical and science experts are learning more each day. You should take steps to regularly inform people of the most current, fact-based information about how to stay safe and protect the health and wellbeing of others.

Check your connections: Make sure that your communications and technology infrastructure are secure and operational. Use web-based platforms and secure networks to share information.

Engage your employees: Involve your employees in processes that are part of the solution. Work with them to identify and find ways to reduce risks. Encourage them to be a part of sharing what they have learned with others.

Stay connected: Keep in touch with staff who are on COVID-related leave. They need to feel they are doing the right thing by avoiding contact with others or being home to care for others.

Show your appreciation: Recognize and thank those who are working the front lines. If you can, offer hazard pay. Have your Board express their appreciation in ways that are meaningful to the staff.

Embed your learning: Take what you have learned and document what works. Use it for developing your emergency response plan for future pandemics.

Conclusion

It will likely be many months before life as we know it returns, if at all.

Pandemics of respiratory viruses, such as COVID-19, can be declared ‘over’ only when the proportion of the population that is immune is large enough that transmission between people is no longer sustained. That can happen in two ways:

- 1) After enough people have been infected and have recovered and/or,**
- 2) When enough people have been immunized with a vaccine, which is likely at least 18 months away.**

In the meantime, and as we progress through this next phase of BC’s Restart Plan, there are a number of steps that you, as an employer, should take to continue to ensure safe and responsible delivery of services to the people you support.

1 First and foremost, **assess the risks** at your workplace, service centres and residential sites, and develop a plan to reduce or eliminate those risks.

2 **Adopt and implement measures** as outlined in this guide to address increased risk.

3 **Understand your obligations** as an employer to ensure the rights of your workers to a safe, virus-free workplace.

4 **Build and sustain trust.** Adopt a management style that considers the unique circumstances that each of your employees faces and make informed, decisions from a place of concern and understanding.

Never was the expression ‘It takes a village’ truer than at this moment in our history.

We are all in this together.



Resources & Links

[BC's Re-start Plan](#)

[BC COVID-19 Go-Forward Management Strategy](#)

[WorkSafeBC: Returning to Safe Operation](#)

[Public Health Agency of Canada](#)

[BCHousing COVID-19 Operations Manual](#)

[Kent Employment Law: COVID-19 and the Workplace – What Employers Need to Know](#)

[Matthews Dinsdale: Covid-19 and the Workplace Frequently-Asked-Questions](#)

[Gowling WLG: Temperature Screening at Workplaces: A “Hot” Topic Amid the Covid-19 Pandemic,](#)

[BC Assessment Tool](#)

[The Wisdom Group COVID-19 Resources Page](#)

[BCNPHA COVID-19 Web Resources Page](#)

Chronology of Public Pronouncements in BC

**May 7
2020**

The Government of British Columbia announced that Phase 2 of the Restart Plan is scheduled to begin after the May long weekend ([link](#)).

**May 7
2020**

The Government of British Columbia launched a renewal plan for surgeries that were postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic ([link](#)).

**May 6
2020**

The Government of British Columbia announced the province's Restart Plan, which will begin mid-May ([link](#)).

**May 4
2020**

The Government of British Columbia extended the temporary layoff period from 13 weeks to 16 weeks to permit employers to quickly resume operations when the health emergency ends ([link](#)).

**May 1
2020**

The Government of British Columbia deferred renewal fees for liquor licensees experiencing financial hardship until September 30, 2020 ([link](#)).

**April 30
2020**

The British Columbia provincial court will take steps towards re-opening ([link](#)).

**April 30
2020**

The Government of British Columbia released interim guidance to operators of hotels, motels, hostels, inns and other forms of travel accommodation for preventing the transmission of COVID-19 ([link](#)).

**April 29
2020**

Premier John Horgan and public health officer Dr. Bonnie Henry have discussed re-opening the economy by mid-May, however plans have not yet been announced as the province continues to monitor COVID-19 developments.