

COVID-19

May 28, 2020

I remember the movie *Jaws*, a story about a Great White Shark that attacked people outside of the New England seaside town of Amity. It was an unknown, invisible, unpredictable, deadly force that appeared at unsuspected moments and dealt devastation upon its victims. It also proved to be very difficult to kill. Does any of this sound familiar? The lessons that I took from that movie were that I should learn to recognize risks and to get the heck out of the water.

During this time of COVID I have often wondered what is real and what is swimming invisible and unknown just beneath the surface. I sometimes find myself lost in trends, models, projections and predictions. I struggle at times to make sense of it all. There is a lot that I do not know, but I do know that our Province is doing very well at flattening the curve. However, there is still an unseen force that is lurking just beneath the surface and is ready to engage whenever we let our guard down. This concerns me as we move forward.

This unseen threat, according to the US Center for Disease Control, is that more than a third of coronavirus patients do not have any symptoms at all and yet can still transmit the virus. The US CDC speculate that fully 40% of virus transmissions happen before people feel sick.

It is the responsibility of TCS, to the best of our ability, to anticipate and mitigate risks to the individuals whom we support, our staff members and our family and friends. As a result, our focus will be to identify our unique challenges in “opening up”, highlight the risks and take appropriate steps to safeguard against them.

WHAT TO EXPECT

The two main considerations that increase the risk of transmission, according to Dr. Behan-Smith, our Deputy Provincial Health Officer, are the number of people that come into contact and the proximity and intensity of that contact. These are risks that we need to mitigate.

Everyone, I am sure, wants the precautions to end and a return to the pre-pandemic normal but this will not happen for many months. Many of our community programs will not look the same as the number of participants will be greatly reduced. Our recovery will be a process; a slow, cautious and sometimes frustrating process.

We ask for your patience as we move forward and develop our plans. The plans will include both generic agency wide guidelines, as well as, program specific recovery plans. Our utmost focus is to keep people safe and this will take all of us working together to ensure that safeguards are followed. It will be difficult sometimes because services will look different and we will not be able to provide many services at the desired level – at pre-pandemic levels.

VIGILENCE

As we enter the recovery phase, safeguards and restrictions will loosen and contacts will increase. There will be a natural human tendency to become less diligent because the world is opening up. World Health Organization infectious disease epidemiologist, Maria Van Kerkhove, has said that “anytime you become complacent and you think you know, it will surprise you. We all want this to be over, but we have a long way to go.”

Much of what happens is in our hands and so far, all of us at TCS have been doing a great job. Not one of the individuals whom we support has tested positive. Please remember to keep up with the application of the big four:

1. Keeping your distance. Always leave 2 meters between yourself and others;
2. Washing your hands with soap frequently for at least 20 seconds. Hot water is not required;
3. Coughing or sneezing into the crook of your arms or into a tissue and then safely discarding it; and,
4. Continuing our intensive cleaning regime.

We must remain vigilant. We must protect people and ourselves.

QUESTIONS

If you have questions for Kristine or me, please send them to COVIDQuestions@tcsinfo.ca and we will do our best to answer them. I know many of you have questions regarding last weeks announcement regarding the \$4 essential service compensation. We continue to seek clarity on how this funding will be distributed and will update you all when this becomes clarified.

RECOGNITION

The state of emergency in BC has been extended and yet our count remains at zero for positive tests for the individuals that we support. I truly appreciate the efforts of everyone who has had a hand in keeping people safe. We have a reputation as an agency that is committed to the individuals that we support and with COVID this has been reinforced and demonstrated that we seek solutions even in these most challenging of times. We rally, we reach out, we look at the totality of an individual and look to enhance each day. We are very rarely stymied because we are passionate about what we do. As we consider entering the recovery phase, this is what we need to continue doing. We need to reach out to and support each other, we need to share our thoughts and brainstorm solutions and keep individuals and their quality of life first and foremost. We stand together and we stand strong. We are TCS - this is what we do. I am proud to stand amongst you.

Thank you for all that you do.

Remember to reach out and connect with others, to stay strong and to please stay safe.

Bob Cornish, CEO