

COVID-19

April 23, 2020

Part of my “new normal” is to sit down each week, reflect and compose an update for all of you. There has been so much in the news this week starting with word from Dr. Bonnie Henry that our efforts in BC are paying off. This is heartening although my thoughts remain with the family and friends of those who have perished from the virus. There is also the news of the senseless violence that occurred in Nova Scotia. My heart goes out to the family, friends and neighbours of those who were murdered in Nova Scotia and to the RCMP who lost a member. As our Prime Minister said, “we stand with you and we grieve with you. We will get through this together”.

UPDATE

In the midst of tragic news, there is a glimmer of light. As of Monday, there has not been any of the individuals that we support at TCS testing positive for COVID-19. This is very good news indeed and speaks to impact of our strict adherence to the protocols that we have in place.

PPE's

We have now distributed the 72 hour PPE kits for all programs. We are still compiling the seven day supplies and will hopefully have these out by the end of this week.

Our PPE's are for use only with symptomatic or COVID-19 positive individuals. We have a decent supply for the medium term but if we were to be hit hard by the virus, then we will run short. We are considering other safeguards that we can implement individually and as an agency that will assist in keeping us COVID free. This may include having you consider keeping a separate set of clothes, including shoes, for work. You should also consider contacting local seamstresses to make cotton masks for us. Let's work together to ensure that we save the PPE's for when they are really needed.

Again, I would like to thank our very tenacious and successful procurement team. It has been remarkable to witness their ability to add to our stock of PPE's when there has been such an international shortage. Please join me in thanking Luis, John, Amy, Dave, Danielle, Tara, Joanne, Anna, Jana and Guido. Your efforts are keeping us all safe.

OPENING UP

Conversations are beginning to occur about reducing the restrictions and returning to some semblance of our pre-COVID “normal”. Dr. Henry, our Provincial Health Officer, says that it may well be months before we are back to our pre-pandemic behaviour and that any loosening of restrictions will be done gradually.

TCS will certainly follow the recommendations of Dr. Henry. As we escalated in our response to COVID-19, so will we gradually reduce them. It may begin with one family member visiting a loved one in a staffed residential home after we have taken measures to reduce the risk which may include taking their temperature. When the time comes, we will be following Health guideline and we will be communicating with all of you.

VIGILANCE – A Constantly Repeated Reminder

We cannot state too often that safeguards work. In order to beat this pandemic, we must remain vigilant and not let our guard down. Even if the curve begins to subside, we must ‘double down’ until the virus is eradicated. We do this to protect the individuals whom we support and to protect our family, friends and ourselves. The four most important safeguards are:

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. Increasing our cleaning regime.

WELLNESS

We are indeed living in strange and stressful times. We are being told don’t touch, don’t congregate, stay apart and practice strict interpersonal hygiene while at the same time told to please remain connected. For many this is difficult to navigate and as a result mental health issues are on the rise. I ask that as colleagues and as caring individuals, lets all watch out for and over each other. If we see someone struggling, please connect with them or encourage them to connect with support services.

Below I have listed some available resources.

- Wellness Together Canada - <https://ca.portal.gs/>
- Province of BC - COVID-19 supports page – includes a specific tab at the bottom re: health & mental health
- <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/covid-19-provincial-support>
- Province of BC - COVID-19 virtual mental health supports –
<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/managing-your-health/mental-health-substance-use/virtual-supports-covid-19>
- Province of BC - Managing COVID-19 Stress, Anxiety & Depression
<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/managing-your-health/mental-health-substance-use/managing-covid-stress>

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.

FRONT LINE RECOGNITION

I am always very proud of TCS and the work that we do in supporting individuals in their homes and in the community but I have never been as proud of our agency as I am now. You are standing on the front line and continuing to provide support. I recognize that not everyone can do this and acknowledge that it must be difficult to be away from the workplace and your colleagues. Some of our team is away because of their own compromised health or to support young children. Others are away because they are living with or supporting someone with compromised health which is also necessary during this pandemic. We all do our part to defeat this virus and to make the world a healthier and better place. For this, I thank 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