

COVID-19

April 9, 2020

UPDATE

As of Monday, April 6th, we have not had any of our TCS community test positive for COVID-19 but have had two individuals receiving support from TCS that were considered symptomatic. One has been self-isolating since mid-March and the other is the only person in a staffed facility. This is remarkable for an agency with over 900 individuals receiving service. I give credit to our teams and **thank you** for your diligence in supporting and safeguarding those we serve.

CONTINGENCIES

When COVID-19 first appeared on the horizon, we did not know what it would bring. Knowledge of the virus was very limited but most people knew that it could become a game changer. Even before COVID-19 was declared a pandemic we heard how devastating the virus was becoming and started our own planning. On March 11th, a pandemic was declared and all BC social services were designated as essential services.

As the pandemic progressed so did our planning. We developed a pandemic plan which continues to evolve. It identifies stages and how TCS will respond in each stage. It identifies contingency plans which also continue to evolve. If a resident of a staffed residential resource is symptomatic, we have plans to isolate the individual in a room in the home. We have other plans to use spaces in our day program and CI areas as required. In some communities we are exploring the ability to rent rooms in drive-up motels to isolate or relocate individuals. Our pandemic plan is regularly sent out to all staff members

We will continue to look at all measures to safeguard our staff members and the individuals that we support.

PPE'S

Our Procurement Task Force has done a great job in acquiring Personal Protective Equipment. This has been accomplished despite an international shortage. If all of our orders are fulfilled, we will have a sufficient supply of PPE's for the medium term. Once we received all of our orders, we will continue with the distribution of the PPE's to our different communities. My heartfelt thanks to all of the Task Force members.

We will also be distributing posters and videos on how to put on the PPE's and how to safely remove them. It's imperative that we all review the material and if you are uncertain of the steps to reach out and ask for additional support.

RAPID RESPONSE

We have had number of questions regarding a Rapid Response Team. When COVID-19 was declared a pandemic, we imagined a possible time when the staff members in a residential program were struck down by the virus. We have proactively planned and asked most of the community CSWs if they would be willing to be part of such a response team. We are prepared should the need for a Rapid Response Team activation be required, but thankfully have not needed to activate a team. We will continue to closely monitor and react quickly if staff members in a particular program become symptomatic.

REACHING OUT

Remember the many individuals that we support in Day Programs, CI, Out Reach and Home Sharing have family member who have also relied greatly on our support. They are now hunkered down and isolating with the individual that they are supporting without their usual period of respite or regular empathetic communication with our staff. Please remember to reach out to them and offer the compassionate support that we are known for. They will appreciate it now more than ever.

STAFFING IN A TIME OF CRISIS - PART 2

We have had a number of questions regarding leaves and paid leaves.

In my bulletin of March 25th, we asked staff who are not symptomatic, but who are concerned about having contracted the virus to contact 8-1-1. **This has now changed.** If you call 8-1-1, you must identify yourself as a frontline health worker and be referred to your Health Authorities COVID-19 line. An 8-1-1 operator telling you to isolate will not suffice. Please obtain the name of the practitioner on the COVID-19 line, the date of the call and their recommendations. If the recommendation is to quarantine, then you will be placed on a paid leave of absence for the quarantine period which must not extend past 14 days. You are expected to keep TCS informed of your symptoms during this time. If you become sick during your quarantine, you are required to let us know and you will be switched to sick pay.

If you have been required by your physician to be excluded from work for a period of time exceeding 14 days for whatever reason, including due to an underlying medical condition that puts you at risk during the pandemic, then you are required to use your accruals, sick leave or EI Sick Leave. This is not paid leave.

To be on paid leave, you must return within 14 days and be willing to work or to be redeployed. In the vast majority of cases, paid leave is not available for a period of time that exceeds 14 days.

These are the rules as they now stand. If this changes, staff members will be notified.

FINANCIAL SUPPORTS

There may be some of you who are struggling to keep up to the financial obligations during this time. Here is a comprehensive list of supports that are available as a result of COVID-19. This is current as of April 6, 2020. [Supports Summary - April 2020](#)

VIGILANCE – A 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 that we support and to protect our family, friends and ourselves. The four most important safeguards are:

1. Keeping your distance. 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 tissue and then safely discarding it; and,
4. Increasing our cleaning regime.

QUESTIONS

If you have questions for Kristine or me, please send your them to COVIDQuestions@tcsinfo.ca and we will attempt to answer them.

FRONT LINE RECOGNITION

At 7 pm every night in many locations, you can hear people clapping, beating on pots and shouting their support for the frontline workers. If this does not happen in your home community or if you are too far from the action, I am sure that you have seen it on the news. They are cheering for frontline workers who provide care and support for vulnerable populations. They are cheering for you. I add my voice and I cheer for you also.

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