

Subject: COVID-19 Updates - June 22, 2020

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From: Ernie Baatz

To: Ernie Baatz

Risks and Safeguards

By now we are all familiar with some of the ways we can protect ourselves and others from the risks posed by Covid-19: physical distancing, hand washing, staying home if we're sick. We also know that some people are at greater risk than others of contracting the virus or of becoming seriously ill from it. Some of the enhanced risk factors are:

- Being over 60 years old
- Having an underlying health condition
- Having difficulty practicing hand hygiene
- Requiring close personal care
- Having difficulty maintaining physical distance
- Mental health challenges

Many of the people we support have one or more of these risk factors. Others have family members, caregivers or staff who have some of these risk factors. An important part of our Phase Two planning is to identify these risks and develop safeguards to mitigate the risks as people begin to expand their activities and contacts.

As always, we are taking our cue from government and health authorities and aligning our plans with the most up-to-date information on Covid-19. There's no question that some level of restrictions will remain in place, both to protect the most vulnerable citizens and to protect our health care system. The question is how to maintain those protections while also allowing people to get on with living their lives. People cannot stay in their homes, separated from loved ones and valued activities, indefinitely. However, the frequency and intensity of increased activities and contacts will vary from one person to another, based on their risk factors.

Spectrum's leaders have been working with each individual and their network to develop safeguards to address their unique risks. We are also assessing the risks to our staff and workplaces. Spectrum doesn't have a day program facility and we never actually closed any worksites, but many of the community sites we use remain closed – community centres, neighbourhood houses, coffee shops. The Spectrum office has been closed to drop-in visitors but has remained open for essential administrative functions and will be more accessible going forward for scheduled meetings and room bookings.

Following is a summary of safeguards we have implemented to address risks in relation to individuals, staff and worksites.

For Individuals

- Assessed risks for each individual and identified person-specific safeguards / risk mitigation strategies;
- Reduced size of teams and number of locations staff work at, to minimize contacts;
- Seeking guidance from individuals' health care providers;
- Supporting individuals to stay home if they are ill and to get tested if they show symptoms;
- Instruction for individuals on preventive measures (modelling, repetition, plain language);

- Seeking professional support for those who need it (eg counselling);
- Frequent check-ins with individuals and families, seeking consensus on any plans to increase contacts or activities;
- Point of contact risk assessment (prior to entering homes, providing personal care);
- Enhanced cleaning of homes and surfaces;
- Use of PPE for personal care and when physical distancing cannot be maintained;
- Limiting visitors to the homes, and ensuring visitors follow established guidelines re: hand hygiene, distancing;
- Focus on preferred activities and fewer transitions, minimizing stress;
- Providing individuals with factual information from reliable sources and supporting them to understand the information;
- Using technology to augment in-person support (facetime, texting, phone calls).

For staff

- Support for staff to take time off for their own health concerns or to care for family members;
- Ensuring staff who return from international travel self-isolate for 14 days;
- Ensuring staff do not come to work if they are sick;
- Ensuring staff get tested if they show symptoms of Covid-19;
- Ensuring displaced staff are reassigned and that they maintain their hours and pay;
- HR in regular contact with staff who are off work, coordinating and monitoring all return to work plans;
- Maintain reduced number of staff working in each location while ensuring there are enough relief to backfill staff who are off;
- Provide staff with equipment needed to work from home;
- New working from home guidelines;
- Ensuring all staff take time off to avoid burnout;
- Training on the use of PPE and cleaning guidelines;
- Regular communication and check-ins with staff and caregivers;
- Ensuring caregivers have respite options and are able to take a break;
- Enhanced employee assistance plan and extended health benefits;
- Employee appreciation efforts.

For our worksites

- The office will remain closed to drop-in visitors;
- Engineering controls, physical distancing measures, cleaning measures and room limits in place at the office;
- Alternate meeting places for community inclusion supports;
- Alternate / modified community inclusion activities (eg picnics instead of restaurant outings);
- Guidelines for staff providing support from the individual or family's home;
- Provide as much physical separation between residents in the home as possible (move furniture to create distance, no shared food or personal items);
- Arrange grocery delivery / online ordering for those who cannot safely get out to grocery shop;
- Focus on outdoor activities;

- Coordinate plans with other service providers for re-engaging with day program or other services;
- Focus on walking and transit rather than use of personal vehicles;
- Guidelines for safe use of personal vehicles when necessary;
- Maintain supply of PPE and reliable sourcing for future needs.

There is a lot to consider as we move into this next phase of our recovery plan. We will be relying on the input of our teams, families, and individuals to guide our decision-making about what we can safely support now, and what things will need a bit more time to re-start. We thank everyone for their patience and support as we move forward together.

My COVID19 Virus Test Experience

by Barb Goode

I'm writing this to help people understand what happens you have to have the virus test.

On Wednesday April 29th, 2020, I went with my friend Tina to see my doctor because I had a cough. My doctor sent me for a Covid19 virus test. I thought it would be scary. We had to drive to Central Park. It was outside. I sat in the back seat of Tina's car. Drive thru. Not too many cars. I wasn't sure what was going to happen. It was like a science fiction movie, people in uniforms and masks. A few questions were asked. I was told what was going to happen.

Test : They took my temperature under my tongue, then they put a long Q-tip up my nose. 5 seconds. Instructions were to wait 2 days, someone would phone.

I stayed inside and I was excited that it came back Negative (I didn't have it).

If I had it I would have a runny nose, cough and fever. I didn't have anything. I felt very nervous, scared. If I had it I thought I had to go to the hospital. But I learned I would just have to stay home 2 weeks, away from people.

I think some people are being told that it's terrible. I didn't know if it was going to be painful. From my point of view, and I've been through some tough times lately, it was a little yucky but it was all right once I got going.

— with [Tina Dam](#) and [Barb Goode](#).

Other Updates

- **Pandemic Pay** – The Province of BC and the government of Canada have announced a \$4/hour supplement to front-line workers in government funded services including community social services. This pay is for a 16 week period beginning March 15th and ending July 4th, 2020. The pay will be calculated on hours worked at straight time and paid as a lump sum once government has provided the funding to agencies.
- **Emergency Funding for home-share providers** – Spectrum has submitted our application for Emergency Advance Funding for the month of June and included a request for the emergency amounts for our home share providers. Once the applications are approved, we will confirm a payment date for additional amounts for our home share contractors.
- **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)** – Managers make the requests for PPE supplies for people

we support. Let your manager know if there is equipment you need. We have a good supply of both medical masks for providing close personal care and fabric masks for times when you know it will be difficult to maintain physical distancing.

Thank you to everyone for your efforts to keep the people we support and their teams safe and healthy!

Ernie Baatz

Executive Director

Spectrum Society for Community Living

Express yourself. Build your network. Find your voice.

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Be Calm, Be Kind, Be Safe