

# Critical COVID-19 News

Information for medical staff

**March 31 at 7 p.m.**

***Sent on behalf of Dr. Maureen O'Donnell & Susan Wannamaker***

*Chief medical officer and chief operating officer of PHSA's COVID-19 EOC*

Thank you for your continued diligence in caring for patients around B.C. and supporting our provincial systems, while at the same time, helping us to advance our thinking about how we respond to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. We have immense appreciation for how hard everyone is working.

We know the days are long and the ongoing energy that this pandemic requires weighs very heavily on those in health care. The strength, compassion and commitment to excellence that members of our workforce continue to exude is nothing short of amazing. Every one of you is making a significant contribution to the province of British Columbia.

Our daily bulletins contain the latest workforce information. **Please read them carefully.**

## **Highlights:**

### **Breaking news from government:**

- 1. New child care process from the B.C. government**
- 2. Restricting dispatch of first responder groups**

## **Other important updates:**

- 1. New: Zoom for health care providers**
- 2. Reminder: Medical staff town hall tomorrow**
- 3. Update: Working from home**
- 4. Survey for health care workers who travel to work by ferry**

**New child care process from the B.C. government**

- To support parents who are essential service workers during the response to COVID-19, the [B.C. government announced today](#) that it is launching a new process that will match parents who are working on the front lines of B.C.'s COVID-19 response and have children **up to five years of age** with child care in their communities.
- Starting today, essential workers can fill out a new "parent" form to identify their need for urgent child care. [Forms can be accessed online](#) or by calling 1 888-338-6622 and selecting Option 4.
- As noted last week, the B.C. government [is encouraging all child care facilities](#) that remain open to prioritize any available spaces for children of essential service workers – specifically prioritizing placements for children whose parents work in direct-to-public health services, such as those individuals delivering patient care in hospitals and emergency response.
- For the week of March 30, urgent situations have been addressed for frontline health care workers.

***If you have school-aged children (K-6):***

- School districts and independent school authorities are working on longer-term plans to expand capacity to provide child care and supports for school-aged children of essential service workers, with a priority focus on Health and Health Services, Social Services, Law Enforcement, First Responders, and Emergency Response.
- Contact your school principals (public and independent) as soon as possible to determine how best to meet the need for urgent child care beginning the week of March 30th.
- **Vancouver School Board only:** For families in Vancouver, the Vancouver School Board has announced that all child care spots for children from Pre K to grade 6 for essential service workers in Vancouver are being coordinated by [Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre \(WCCRC\)](#).

***If you have children aged 0-5 (Pre K):***

- As noted above, to support parents who are essential service workers during the response to novel coronavirus (COVID-19), the Province is launching a new process to match parents who are working on the front lines of B.C.'s COVID-19 response and have children up to five years of age with child care in their communities. Starting today, essential workers can fill out a new "parent" form to identify their need for urgent child care. Forms can be accessed by calling 1 888 338-6622 and selecting Option 4, or online: [www.gov.bc.ca/essential-service-child-care](http://www.gov.bc.ca/essential-service-child-care)
- Child Care Resource Referral (CCRR) centres in 38 communities will act as community-based hubs. The CCRRs will reach out to essential-service workers in their area who filled in the form to connect them with available licensed child care spaces.
- Child care spaces will be prioritized for children whose parents work in public health and health services, social services, law enforcement, first responders and emergency response sectors. Additional spaces will then be given to families working in other crucial roles, defined as essential service workers.

- The number of spaces available for essential service workers will be up to each child care operator, based on its licensed capacity and following any additional health requirements established by the Provincial Health Officer (PHO).
- Hours of operation for spaces will vary by facility. While many centres are open Monday to Friday, others may offer care on the weekends and outside the hours of 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. Government is monitoring whether the needs of essential service workers for care outside of regular hours are being met.

### Restricting dispatch of first responder groups

- The PHO is restricting the dispatching of first responder groups (non-paramedics) during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- This is intended to minimize the risk to first responders, patients and the broader community.
- BC Emergency Health Services (BCEHS) will only notify first responders of the most critical calls, as well as motor vehicle incidents, or any other calls that need their technical support.
- First Responder agencies may also be considered for attendance at certain calls if an ambulance is expected to take longer than 20 minutes.
- These provisions are in place until instructed otherwise by the PHO and will help reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19, while also ensuring that our first responder partners remain available when their assistance and support is most needed.

### New: Zoom for health care providers

- *ZOOM for Healthcare* was installed on workstations across PHSa early this morning.
- This video conferencing software enables **virtual health service delivery to support patient care** while we are dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **If you are planning to provide care to your patients virtually**, you can request an account for *ZOOM for Healthcare* using this request form <https://bcvh-zoom.phsa.ca>.
- If you have questions about Virtual Health, please talk with your clinical program contact or review the [COVID-19 Virtual Health Toolkit](#).
- Please note, the online form works best in Google Chrome rather than Internet Explorer.
- For the new ZOOM application to be fully installed, the computer or device must be connected to the network (plugged in or wireless).
- Those working remotely will have to come to a worksite to enable the installation to complete and to activate the account.

### Reminder: Medical staff town hall tomorrow

- Our next medical staff town hall (teleconference) will be held tomorrow (April 1) at **7 a.m.**
- Continue to send in your questions via [Slido.com](#) using the event code **#PHSAMedicalStaff**. 'Like' questions that resonate with you or are similar to yours to help us prioritize.
- As noted last week, we have new dial-in number, which will provide a better connection:
  - **1-833-353-8610**
  - Participant code **4478028 #**
- As noted in the [Operational Bulletin](#) earlier today, a town hall for PHSa staff was held this morning.

- A summary of the topics discussed and the time stamps for each of the Slido questions raised during today's virtual town hall can now be [viewed in a story on POD](#) [internal link] or externally [in PDF form on our website](#). You can also [view the full town hall recording](#) [link available externally] [or view the highlights reel](#) [link available externally].

#### **Update: Working from home update**

- On March 30, 2020, PHO Dr. Bonnie Henry stated that the next two weeks will be crucial when it comes to our COVID-19 response and we must be 100% committed to flattening the curve and lessening the impacts of this virus.
- With that in mind, we want to continue our efforts to flatten the curve by supporting employees who can work remotely to be supported to do so wherever possible for the foreseeable future.
- For many roles across PHSA, it is essential that we work in the hospital/health care environment delivering direct patient care, or in provincial support roles that are essential as we support the COVID-19 work and must continue to be done in the workplace. However, by supporting those who can work from home to do so, we also help to protect those who do need to come to the workplace.
- For the foreseeable future, where an employee or physician's job lends itself to remote work, or could be temporarily modified to integrate remote work, we are asking leaders and staff to implement short-term, remote work arrangements.
- We will continue to monitor the situation and determine the right time to bring remote work back in to the workplace. Please note that this might change with minimal notice, as we continue to track and learn more about the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### **Survey for health sector workers who travel to work by ferry**

- In order to safeguard crew to protect essential ferry services, BC Ferries is reviewing service levels to ferry dependent communities.
- The Ministry of Health has asked health authorities, including PHSA, to determine if some potential schedule changes to and from the Sunshine Coast, Southern Gulf Islands, Northern Gulf Islands and Queen Charlotte Islands will impact health sector workers living in communities who must take the ferry to travel to and from work.
- Please [review and complete the following survey](#) by April 2, 2020 **ONLY** if you rely on BC Ferries to commute to and from your workplace.

#### **Thank you for your continued dedication**

The service that each and every one of you offers for patients and families – and the essential support you provide to provincial systems – is critical, and is making a meaningful difference in B.C.

#### **Your ongoing sources of information**

- We are sending daily updates. Watch for emails from [phsacomm@phsa.ca](mailto:phsacomm@phsa.ca).
- Continue to send in your questions via [Slido.com](#) using the event code **#PHSAMedicalStaff**. 'Like' questions that are similar to yours to let us know the priority topics to cover at our virtual town halls and in future communications.
- Continue to check the [BCCDC's website](#) as a trusted source of information.
- Visit the [staff COVID-19 section on phsa.ca](#) to access [PHSA News](#) and COVID-19 information when off the network.

- BCEHS alerts and updates are on the [BCAS intranet](#) and in the [BCEHS Handbook](#). *[Note: you must be on the BCEHS network to access these links].*
- For site-specific questions, please check in with your manager or clinical leadership.
- For trusted information from around the world, please check the [World Health Organization website](#).