



COVID-19 Operational Updates

Information for medical staff

March 24 at 4:40 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*

Your continued effort to serve the public – and each other – during these challenging times is truly an inspiration. People are coming together across all facets of the health care system in the name of responding to COVID-19.

As the situation continues to evolve, we appreciate that there is new information coming to you frequently. We are doing our best to streamline communications.

Our *Critical COVID-19 News* bulletins (red banner) are being sent on a daily basis – these are the 'need to know' updates and the latest developments. Sometimes, we supplement the *Critical COVID-19 News* bulletins with *COVID-19 Operational Updates* (blue banner) – these are intended to bring important resources back to the top of your inbox and ensure you have the latest information.

All bulletins are posted and archived on our [external website](#).

Operational updates:

- 1. Clarifying medical staff bulletin distribution lists**
- 2. New: Coding for COVID-19 and PEARL notifications**
- 3. Reminder: COVID-19 resource line from Workplace Health**
- 4. Information for employees in non-patient care settings**
- 5. Reminder: Busy signals, dropped calls and automated voice error messages**

Clarifying medical staff bulletin distribution lists

- Our medical staff bulletins are being distributed to all of PHSA's credentialed medical staff to the email address which they indicated to Medical Affairs is their preferred address.
- These bulletins follow on the heels on the all-staff bulletins, which are distributed to all PHSA employees, including to medical staff who have a PHSA or a PHSA-program email address.

- Because of this, some medical staff may receive two bulletins: an all-staff bulletin and a medical staff bulletin.
- Note, there are only slight variances between the all-staff and the medical staff bulletins, such as information on the medical staff town hall and Slido event code. The most recent all-staff bulletins and the medical staff bulletins will always be [posted to our website](#).

New: Coding for COVID-19 and PEARL notifications

- The PHSA Early Absence Reporting Line (PEARL) has been modified to include a COVID-19 option.
- When an employee calls PEARL, they will hear all the existing PEARL options (Injury at Work, PEARL Illness, Pre-Planned, Other Unplanned Absence) as well as the new COVID-19 option.
- Once an employee selects COVID-19, they will be prompted to select one of these two options:
 1. If you have returned from travel outside of Canada and have been directed by Public Health to self-isolate, press 1. Please note that if you are an essential health care worker and are not symptomatic, you should report to work as scheduled and follow the additional precautions outlined by the Provincial Health Officer;
 2. If you have been in close contact to a positive COVID-19 case, you have not developed symptoms but were advised to self-isolate, press 2.
- For each of the above COVID-19 options (1 and 2) the employee will be prompted to enter the number of days they will be self-isolating. The period of self-isolation for options 1 and 2 should be coded as general paid leave for the duration of the recommended isolation period.
- For casual employees who are directed to self-isolate, they should be placed on a general leave of absence and compensated for any accepted shifts that were cancelled by reason of the general leave.
- Employees who are unable to attend work due to illness, including respiratory-related symptoms, will be prompted to select “PEARL Illness” and should be coded as paid sick leave. In order to avoid unnecessary utilization of health system resources, PHSA will not require a doctor’s note.
- The modification to the COVID-19 options in PEARL will be in effect by mid to late this week
- This information applies to paramedics who are part of central scheduling.
- This may not be relevant for all medical staff, but we are sharing for your awareness.

Information for managers:

- As a manager, you will receive a PEARL email notification notifying you of your employee’s absence. This is just for your information. **It does not mean that your employee has tested positive for COVID-19.**
- If there is any further follow up required from you for employees who are off due to COVID-19 related symptoms, you will be notified. In the absence of this notification, there is no follow up required from you.
- When an employee tests positive for COVID-19, the Provincial Workplace Health or the PHSA Workplace Health team is notified and full contact-tracing is conducted. Managers are involved in the contact-tracing process.

- We understand that there can be uncertainty during these unprecedented times. We would like to reiterate the message that, as a manager, *if you need to know, you will know.*

Reminder: COVID-19 resource line from Workplace Health

- The new PHSA COVID-19 resource line – staffed by nurses – is for all PHSA employees and physicians to address workplace health-related calls regarding COVID-19 matters.
- This resource line will:
 - support workplace health related calls from employees and medical staff
 - triage calls and provide direction to various resources available
 - work closely with our infection control teams
- The resource line is: 1-833-875-2155 (toll free) or 604-875-2155.
- The operational hours are currently set to be 7 days per week from 7 a.m. - 7 p.m.

Information for employees in non-patient care settings

- All employees, including those who do not provide direct patient care such as IMITS, Finance, Human Resources, Communications, Employee Records and Benefits, Supply Chain, our provincial programs and many others, play a critical role within PHSA.
- As the situation with COVID-19 continues to evolve, the health and safety of all employees remains a top priority.
- COVID-19 is transmitted via larger liquid droplets when a person coughs or sneezes. The virus can enter via these droplets through the eyes, nose or throat if you are in close contact.
- For employees that are not providing direct patient care, here are the best methods to prevent infection, whether you are working at home or in one of our facilities:
 - Hand wash for at least 20 seconds.
 - If no sink is readily available, cover all surfaces of your hand with alcohol-based sanitizers until they feel dry.
 - Avoid touching your face, eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.
 - Use available disinfectants and products to clean working surfaces.
 - Practice social distancing and avoid contact with people who are sick.
- Since the virus is not known to transmit via airborne or skin contact routes, personal protective equipment (PPE), such as N95 respirators or gloves, is not required for office settings; N95 respirators are to be used during aerosol-generating medical procedures. Gloves do not replace the need for thorough hand washing.

Reminder: Busy signals, dropped calls and automated voice error messages

- With many people across the province working from home, B.C. residents have been making more voice calls using their cell phones as a substitute to office-provided landline telephones.
- This is causing strain on the cellular infrastructure network, resulting in bouts of busy signals, dropped calls and automated voice error messages.
- If you experience any such disruptions, please be aware that this is due to capacity limitations with the telecom provider directly and not with the health authority network.

Thank you for your continued dedication

The service that each and every one of you offers for our patients and families – and the essential services you provide to our provincial systems – is critical, and is making a meaningful difference in B.C. Thank you for continuing to support one another, the ‘health’ of the health care system and the people of British Columbia.

Your ongoing sources of information

- We are sending daily updates. Watch for emails from phsacomm@phsa.ca.
- Stay tuned for the next virtual town hall date! Continue to send in your questions via [Slido.com](https://www.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.
- We have opened up a [new staff COVID-19 section on phsa.ca](#) where employees can access the same information that is posted on POD, but 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](#).