



Critical COVID-19 News

Information for medical staff

April 9 at 6:50 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

The situation around COVID-19 has challenged us in many ways, but it has also offered us unique opportunities – we have been able to find new ways of working together, working remotely, problem-solving, collaborating and coming together in crisis.

As we head into the long weekend, we hope that you are able to take some time to rest and reflect. Our president and CEO, Benoit Morin, offered some ways you can do this in [his remarks during today's all-staff town hall](#). We hope you can find a little bit of solace and make some time for self-care, in recognition of the contributions that you are making every day to the health of our province.

With or without COVID-19, health care is a 24/7 operation, so we appreciate there will be many team members who are working throughout the weekend – around the province and around the clock. For all those PHSA team members who will be at home this weekend, we encourage you to step out onto your porch or balcony at 7 p.m. each night and cheer on your teammates. We are all in this together.

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

Highlights:

Breaking news from the provincial government:

- 1. More mental health supports announced for health care workers and British Columbians**
- 2. Applications for B.C.'s temporary rental supplement**

Other important updates:

- 3. Conserving and reprocessing of personal protective equipment**
- 4. PHO confirms updated single site order**
- 5. Today's all-staff town**
- 6. Next week's town hall details**

7. Weekend bulletin distribution schedule (Saturday only)

More mental health supports announced for health care workers and British Columbians

- To ensure British Columbians have increased access to vital mental health supports during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Province has announced \$5 million to expand existing mental health programs and services and launch new services to support British Columbians.
- Of particular interest to health care workers, the following virtual support options have been announced:
 - **Mobile Response Team (MRT)** – In addition to supporting workers on the front lines of the overdose public health emergency, PHSA's very own MRT will also support the mental wellbeing and psychological safety of frontline health care workers, specifically home care and long-term care workers, who are experiencing exponential distress and mental health concerns in response to COVID-19. This is available now, 24/7. For more information, call 1 888 686-3022 or email MRT@phsa.ca.
 - **Free online mental health first aid** – New online supports will be offered through the B.C. Psychological Association for frontline health care workers to help them cope with any psychological effects they may be experiencing. This is available now. [Visit their website for more information.](#)
 - **Online resource hub** – Online resources will be expanded to include information to improve psychological and social supports and provide strategies to help frontline workers take care of their mental health and wellbeing. This will be available April 20. For more information, visit the [Canadian Mental Health Association – BC Division's website.](#)
 - **Virtual peer support service** – A phone and text-based peer support service has been launched, staffed by former long-term care and home support workers, to provide confidential emotional support to current workers, and referrals to other services and supports. This will be available May 2020. [Visit CMHA's website](#) for more information.
- Further supports for the general public are also listed in the [B.C. government's news release.](#)

Applications for B.C.'s temporary rental supplement

- Renters who are experiencing a loss of income during the COVID-19 pandemic can now apply for the Province's new temporary rental supplement.
- The program will provide \$300 per month for eligible households with no dependents and \$500 per month for eligible households with dependents. Eligible roommates will each be able to apply for the supplement. The rental supplement is available on a per-household basis to those who meet all of the following criteria [listed in the B.C. government's news release.](#)

Conserving and reprocessing of personal protective equipment

- The Ministry of Health and PHSA Supply Chain are working to ensure that medical supplies and personal protective equipment (PPE) are available and are being well-managed across the health care system.
- We all are focused on conserving PPE, while actively acquiring additional supply.

- Contingency planning is also an important focus. To ensure that the health system continues to have a supply of PPE, we are pursuing the following contingency plans:
 - Procurement of safe and effective alternative PPE that is sourced through newly developed relationships with international manufacturers; and
 - Reprocessing of N95 respirators.
- In terms of reprocessing of N95 respirators, the Ministry of Health – in partnership with Infection Prevention and Control experts, Medical Device Reprocessing experts, mask manufacturers, and Health Canada – is piloting an initiative to reprocess masks for potential reuse by health care workers during the COVID-19 response.
- Used masks will be reprocessed, sterilized, stockpiled and only used in a circumstance where new N95s or equivalent respirators are not available.
- The Ministry of Health is asking that all health authorities, long-term care facilities, and assisted living facilities start to collect used N95 respirators that are not soiled or damaged for reprocessing.
- More details about PHSA’s process for the collection of N95s will be forthcoming. Please watch for updates from your local leaders about site/program-specific collection practices in the days ahead.

Other PPE resources:

- [Watch a short video](#) of Dr. Troy Grennan, IPAC lead, answering some of the questions we received through Slido about asymptomatic transmission, masks and non-medical masks, and scrubs.
- Continue to check [the PPE section](#) on PHSA’s website for updates and resources, including:
 - Posters from the BCCDC
 - [Donning](#) and [doffing](#) videos from PICNet
 - [A PPE decision tool](#)

PHO confirms updated single site order

- PHO Dr. Bonnie Henry confirmed today that she has issued a single site order that will supersede the previous orders issued by the regional health authority medical health officers.
- This order is aimed at protecting the most vulnerable populations in long-term care, assisted living, and provincial mental health facilities. The order will soon be posted on the [government’s website](#).
- To mitigate the risk of COVID-19 transmission among residents, staff and volunteers, it is necessary to limit the movement of personnel between facilities by assigning staff who work at multiple long-term care, assisted living, or provincial mental health facilities to work at a single site.
- The order does not apply to dietitians, medical laboratory technologists, medical laboratory assistants, nurse practitioners, paramedics, pharmacists, physicians, resident physicians, speech language pathologists, inter-facility transport staff, delivery persons, traders people, regular and biochemical waste removal people, biomedical engineers, or any other person or class of person who are exempt by the PHO.
- The order is not intended to restrict staff from employment that is not at a facility, such as home support, social services, or other employment outside a facility named in this order (i.e. acute sites).
- Single site transition terms and guiding principles have been designed and agreed upon between the Health Employers Association of BC and the impacted collective bargaining

associations, and work is underway to analyze the data and assign staff to work at a single site.

- We expect this work to be complete within the next week.

Today's all-staff town hall

- Today's all-staff, virtual town hall included remarks from PHSA's president and CEO Benoit Morin, a public health update from Dr. Réka Gustafson and an HR update from Jaci Edgeworth.
- Should you be interested, you can:
 - [View the highlights reel](#) on YouTube.
 - [Watch the full recording online.](#)
 - [Review the PHSA News Story on POD](#) to read about the themes, the questions that were asked and the time stamps for each answer in (or view [the PDF form of PHSA News](#), for ease of access if you are not on the network).

Next week's town hall details

- Our next **medical staff town hall** will be held by teleconference on **Wednesday, April 15 at 7 a.m.** To add the details to your calendar, open the Outlook invitation attached to this email and click 'save and close'.
- Our next **all-staff town hall** will be held on **Tuesday, April 14, 2020** from **10:30 – 11:30 a.m.** Webcast/dial-in options [can be viewed on our website](#).

Weekend bulletin distribution schedule (Saturday only)

- Barring any unexpected, major issues, the Critical COVID-19 News bulletin will **only be distributed on Saturday, April 11** over the long weekend.
- Bulletins will resume again on Tuesday, April 14.

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.
- Send in your questions via [Slido.com](#) using the event code **#PHSATownHall**. '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.
- 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.
- For BCEHS alerts and updates, check 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](#).