



April 27, 2020

Dear Families:

For the last few months, COVID-19 (Coronavirus) has dominated the news cycle and caused concern in our communities and cross the globe. The care and safety of our patients and clients, team members and families are our top priority, and we are doing everything we can to ensure your loved ones stay safe and well while in our care at all of our BCMHSUS facilities - Provincial Forensics Psychiatric Hospital and Clinics, the Burnaby Centre for Mental Health and Addiction, the Heartwood Centre for Women, and Correctional Health Services.

Family, as you define it, plays an important role in your loved one's care and safety. We are committed to communicating with you as we navigate this unprecedented crisis. In this letter, you will find information about how we are responding to COVID-19. We invite you to stay connected with us, ask questions and share your thoughts.

Our safety measures

We acted quickly in mid-March to set up Emergency Operations Centres (EOCs) at all of our facilities and programs. Our EOCs meet daily to share information and solve problems quickly. Response speed is critical when dealing with a contagious virus, such as COVID-19.

Here are some of the measures we've put in place at our facilities:

- We're cleaning shared spaces often and thoroughly, and have implemented physical-distancing measures.
- We're testing for COVID-19 as soon as any patient begins to show symptoms of illness.
- We've set up isolation zones in each facility to contain spread should any patient's COVID-19 test come back positive.
- We've modified admission processes for some programs to ensure new patients are symptom-free for 14 days before joining other residents in activities.
- We've put a symptom-checking process in place for staff, contractor and delivery personnel to ensure COVID-19 is not entering our facilities from the outside.

Maintaining minimal disruption to quality care

Our goal throughout this crisis is to maintain your loved one's care uninterrupted.

- Therapy and group programs are continuing, with some modifications to ensure appropriate physical-distancing. We are following safety standards as directed by the Ministry of Health and BC Centre for Disease Control.
- We are also doing everything we can to keep our patients active, and their days interesting.



At the Forensic Psychiatric Hospital, for instance, the rehabilitation team is organizing one-to-one or small group walks and bike rides, instead of larger community outings. More kitchen time is also available so patients can cook for enjoyment, with physical-distancing measures in place.

- We are using virtual health technologies to connect patients, clients, families and providers. Where possible and appropriate, families can continue to join your loved one's patient-care meetings using these technologies.
- We're aware that Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), such as face masks and shields, can change the way people communicate. Staff are trying different ways to reassure their patients and maintain a strong relationships while wearing PPE.

How you can help

Please help us keep our patients, clients staff and community safe by following the measures below until COVID-19 is no longer a threat:

- **Connecting with your loved one by phone or video (including FaceTime), instead of visiting in person.** For now, only essential visitors can come into our facilities. There are iPads and phones at every site that patients and clients can use to stay in touch with you. Please contact the facility to ask about essential visits, or how to connect with your loved one using technology.
- **Staying involved in your loved-one's care using virtual health.** Your role as a partner on the care team is important. We don't want physical-distancing measures to change that. Please contact your loved one's treatment team to find out how to connect using virtual health.

For up-to-date information on COVID-19 across BC Mental Health and Substance Use Service, please visit bcmhsus.ca.

Stay connected

Families are key to our patients' wellness. We are doing everything we can to keep you and your loved ones safe, healthy and connected. Together, we will continue to deliver the highest quality of care.

If you have questions or concerns, please contact the BCMHSUS Patient Experience and Community Engagement team at engage_bcmhsus@phsa.ca.

Warmly,

Lynn Pelletier

Vice President, Mental Health and Substance Use Services Provincial Health Services Authority