



April 17th CLBC Teleconference for Individuals and Families

Plain Language Summary of Questions and Answers

Who were the presenters answering questions on this call?

- Minister Shane Simpson, Social Development and Poverty Reduction
- Dr. Daniele Behn Smith, Deputy Provincial Health Officer
- Ross Chilton, CEO, Community Living BC

Question- Will people with disabilities be treated in an equitable (fair) way to make sure their health needs are met without discrimination?

Answer:

- Yes. The Minister of Health wants all people with a disability in BC to know they will receive fair and equal access to all health care, including any emergency hospital care.

Question- What will happen if I, or the person I care for, gets sick?

Answer:

- There have already been some situations where this has happened and everyone worked together (CLBC, service provider, individual, health system) to make sure the right supports were in place.
- Service providers are working very hard to reach out to everyone they support to check in and make plans should and individual or caregiver get sick.
- The health care system is strong and able to get everyone the help they need when they need it.
- Here are the steps CLBC and service providers are focusing on:
 1. Prevention- Start with doing everything possible to stop the spread of COVID-19. Wash hands often. Keep 2 meters from other people. Wash and disinfect the things we touch in our homes often.

2. Get well at home where this is possible- 80% of people who get COVID-19 can safely get better in their home with the help and guidance of health officials.
 3. If the caregiver or individual must go to hospital or move to another home for a period of time, everyone will work together (CLBC, service provider, health, individual) to make sure there is safe place to go.
- It's a good idea for all of us to think about and name all the things we are worried about and what we would do if those things happened.
 - The Self Advocate Leadership Network has created a tool to help with this. [You can find it here.](#)

Question- We are worried about the health and safety of people with extra support needs who are very vulnerable. How is the government getting input from the right people?

Answer:

- The feedback and questions from these teleconferences help government to think deeply about what they need to do to protect and support everyone during this time.
- The Reimagining Community Inclusion steering committee meets with the government every week to share concerns and voice the needs of people with developmental disabilities. This group is made up of self advocates, family members, service providers, community partners and advocacy organizations.
- The government is also creating a broader disability working group to bring more ideas and feedback.
- CLBC has their own network to keep in touch with people and families. For example- Community Councils and the Provincial Advisory Committee.

Question- Things are very confusing and scary. Is there a place I can go to get plain language information?

Answer:

- Each of these calls have a plain language summary posted to the CLBC website.
- You can listen to these calls on an audio recording posted to the CLBC website.

- CLBC is publishing a weekly COVID-19 update for individuals and families that has plain language information about government updates and community resources. There is also a self advocate section. [You can find the latest edition here.](#)
- There are now plain language versions of:
 - New COVID-19 testing guidelines- to be posted soon to the CLBC website
 - Financial supports for people with disabilities – [Click here for a plain language summary](#)
- CLBC is working to make the website easier to find all these plain language resources

Question- I'm worried about mental health issues because of fear and isolation, as well as the fatigue and stress of all the extra duties for caregivers during the pandemic. What is being done to respond?

Answer:

- The government is very aware of the importance of mental health supports during this time.
- The premier announced \$5 million dollars for mental health services. [You can read about those new supports here.](#)
- Service provider and agency support staff are checking-in and figuring out what kind of support is needed. This will be different for each person.
- CLBC is supporting agencies to be creative in how they change the way support is provided to make sure people and families get what works best for them during this time.
- CLBC staff are reaching out to those families and individuals who are not involved with agencies to make sure they have what they need.

Question- Self advocates and individuals want to be supported to create an emergency plan. Who makes sure this happens?

Answer:

- It's a good idea for ALL of us to sit down with someone we trust to think about and name all the things we are worried about. We should write down what we would do and who would help if any of those things happened.
- The Self Advocate Leadership Network has created a tool to help with this kind of planning. [You can find it here.](#)

Question- What is being done to keep our staff and families healthy and informed and to make sure everyone has what they need. If they aren't safe and informed, then neither are we!

Answer:

- Supports for people with disabilities is an Essential Service. This means CLBC and service agencies will work to make sure you get the support you need even when other services are closed because of COVID-19.

- CLBC and the Health system are working closely with service providers and agencies across the social service sector to make sure everyone is updated and understand all the information to support people in safest way possible. Unions are part of the conversation too.

- Luckily there have been very few cases of staff getting COVID-19.

-CLBC understands that self advocates and families are fearful because of what happened at the Ontario 47-person home.

- We are lucky because BC does not have these kinds of institutions anymore. Group homes have a much smaller number of people supported and so people and staff are not at the same risk as the people who lived in the Ontario facility.

-We are very proud of the commitment and courage of our support workers who go to work everyday. We are grateful to home share providers and families too who are stepping up and doing what they can during this time.

Question- CLBC is an essential service. Are we getting Personal Protective Equipment? Is anyone overseeing this?

Answer:

- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) like masks and gloves are still in short supply for everyone.

- The health care system must first protect the people who are most likely to get COVID-19- This includes the elderly and people who have chronic health conditions.

- Settings like group homes are a priority, but only people and staff who are in emergency health situations can get PPE at this time. It will be delivered in these emergency situations.

Question- There was the new order that staff that work in long term care facilities are only allowed to work at one location. What about staff working in group homes or other settings?

Answer:

- Long term care homes have had the most deaths and so this order was put in place to help protect the people who live there.
- The less contact we have with other humans the better.
- As much as possible staff should limit the number of places they go to work.
- But, it is important to balance the risks of getting COVID-19 with making sure there will be enough staff available to provide the essential daily supports that people still need to live their life.
- No staff should go to work if they feel sick or have any symptoms like coughing or a fever.

Question- If a loved one is hospitalized will their caregiver or family member be able to go with them to provide critical information and communication support?

Answer:

- The Ministry of Health has issued an order that says if someone goes into hospital they can have ESSENTIAL visits only. For example- if someone was at the end of their life a family member would be allowed to visit.
- The Essential visit order also includes allowing a caregiver to come in if the patient has feeding or mobility issues.
- CLBC is asking that the health order ALSO include allowing a caregiver or family member to come with a patient to hospital if they need help with communication and/or decision making.
- The Ministry of Health is working to make sure this language is included in the policy and will bring that back as soon as it's available to share.

Question- Is it safe for individuals to be coming and going from respite care, or should they really be self isolating at home?

Answer:

- It is important to balance the risk of spreading COVID-19 with the risk of caregiver burn out.
- The spread of the disease is slowing down because people are doing their part to stay home as much as possible and are following the rules about washing hands and not touch our faces.
- So now is a good time to get some respite if that is what you need to be safe and healthy in your home.
- CLBC is not comfortable giving black and white rules about what service providers and families can and can't do. With 23,000 people being supported across the province, some rules would help and some rules would do harm.
- CLBC trusts that families and service providers know the people they support the best.
- CLBC can provide general guidance, but there will always be exceptions because we are all different and need different things to be safe.

Question- What happens if staff working in group homes (or other locations) show symptoms of having COVID-19? Is there an emergency plan?

Answer:

- There are new COVID-19 testing guidelines. These will be posted on the CLBC website soon.
- Anyone can get a test now if their doctor or health professional believes they have symptoms.
- There will be a lot more testing happening now with a focus on settings like group homes and shelters, as well as in remote and Indigenous communities.
- If a test is positive the local health office will reach out and let you know the steps to follow.
- 80% of people who test positive will not get very sick and recover on their own.
- So far, when someone tests positive, the health teams have been able to respond quickly to help make sure the sickness doesn't spread. These staff have been replaced by someone else.
- If a support worker is sick then they are not to come to work. They will be replaced with another staff.

CLBC hopes to host another teleconference like this in a couple of weeks. Please feel free to send in your questions/feedback to CLBCInfo@gov.bc.ca.