December 3rd, 2021, CLBC Teleconference for Individuals and Families
Plain Language Summary of Questions and Answers

Who were the presenters answering questions on this call?

- Dr. Daniele Behn Smith, Deputy Provincial Health Officer
- Ross Chilton, CEO, Community Living BC

Opening Remarks from Ross:

- We have worked closely with the Provincial Health Office to communicate the new COVID-19 Vaccination Order for CLBC staff and service providers.

Opening Remarks from Dr. Behn Smith:

- We are doing really well in the province
- 81% of eligible people in B.C. have 2 doses of the COVID-19 vaccine and over 90% are partially vaccinated
- We still see lower numbers of people vaccinated in the Interior and Northern Health compared to other areas of the province
- Vaccines are now available for children 5-12 years old
- People who are **not** vaccinated are mostly the ones who are being hospitalized from COVID
- If you are **not** vaccinated, you are 34 times more likely to be hospitalized and 64 times more likely to need critical care compared to people who have been vaccinated against COVID-19
- These are good vaccines. They protect people from getting really sick from COVID-19
- Omicron is now a variant of concern
- We don't know yet if Omicron spreads more quickly and/or makes people sicker
- Here in B.C. the Delta variant makes up 100% of community spread of the virus
- We have really good labs in B.C. that will tell if people are getting the Omicron virus
- COVID is considered an endemic now. This means COVID is not going anywhere and will be part of our lives going forward.
- We expect to see more variants with an endemic and we are prepared.
- The best thing you can do to protect yourself and your community is to get vaccinated.

Question- Can you please tell me who is covered under the Order? I have a direct funding contract with CLBC. Am I required to have all my staff meet the vaccine mandate requirements? Does that include respite staff?

Answer from Ross and Dr. Behn Smith:

- This Order was specifically for health care workers and now has been expanded to include CLBC staff and service providers
- Yes, the Order covers all CLBC staff AND the staff of all CLBC funded contracts including people who use direct funding like Individualized Funding and Respite.
- The Order also includes staff hired through microboards and Person-Centred Societies
- It does not include Home Share providers because they live full time with the individual in their private home.
- Yes, respite workers are included in this Order

Question- Are self advocates, room mates or family members required to be vaccinated?

- No. The Order does not require parents, other family members, or roommates who live full-time with supported individuals to be vaccinated.
- The increased risk of getting COVID-19 comes with being in contact with people you are **not** living with.
- If self advocates are employed and providing supports, then they would also be included in this Order.

Question: Why do home sharing providers get an exemption from the PHO Order?

Answer from Ross:

- We encourage all people including home share providers to be vaccinated
- Home share providers live full time with the person they support so they are not included in the Order.
- The same way the Order does **not** include family members or brother or sisters that live with an individual, it does **not** include home share providers (or others living in the home share) to be vaccinated.
- However, any paid person who is entering a home share to provide services to the individual must be vaccinated.

- If the home sharing provider hires someone to provide respite, either in the home sharing provider home or the respite person's home, they must be vaccinated.

Question: Are direct funded agents themselves required to be vaccinated under this PHO Order?

Answer from Ross:

- Agents are not paid to provide direct support and are therefore **not** required under the Order to be vaccinated, unless they are providing care.
- All paid staff or contractors hired with direct funding are must be vaccinated.

Question- When do you think booster shots will be included in the definition of fully vaccinated as defined by the PHO Order?

Answer from Dr. Behn Smith:

- Boosters will **not** be included in the Order
- If you have had 2 doses of the COVID-19 vaccine, then you have excellent protection
- A booster shot is given when the effectiveness of the 2 does starts to drop off
- This doesn't happen for 7-9 months (or longer) after the second dose
- If you have been double vaccinated, you should feel very confident in the 2 doses you already have
- We will all be getting boosters between 6-8 months after our first shot
- The dropping off of protection happens very gradually so people don't have to rush for their booster shot
- You will be contacted when it's your turn just like before

Question- I have a microboard and hire staff to come into my own home. Do they need to be vaccinated? If so, why don't they get the same exemption as a home sharing provider?

Answer from Ross:

- Yes. The Order applies to all staff of contracted service providers, including staff who work for microboards in a person's home or in the community.
- Home sharing providers are not required to be vaccinated because they live full-time with the individuals they support.

Question- How does the vaccination requirement for service providers affect people's services? What will happen to my son's support services if the agency loses staff and is unable to provide services?

Answer from Ross:

- There are services that are important and services that are essential
- When asked, service providers said, yes, they would be able to continue providing essential services even with the new Order
- We expect most of the service provider staff will be vaccinated and services will continue as usual
- Some people will experience some disruption in their services and usual routine
- Service providers are working extremely hard to do everything they can to continue providing the best and safest support possible

Answer from Dr. Behn Smith:

- This Order was not taken lightly
- We worked together to think through all the risks and to make sure we have the right balance

Question: What if my direct funded staff or respite workers refuse to get vaccinated and I cannot find anyone else to provide services?

Answer from Ross:

- I really do hope that your staff decide to be vaccinated
- The risks of not having the Order were just too high
- They will go on an unpaid leave of absence if they choose not to be vaccinated
- Families can connect with Vela Canada or the Family Support Institute for staffing advice and resources such as Support Worker Central.

Question- Now that PHO Order is in place and may affect recruitment or retention of staff will CLBC reinstate the Interim guidance that allowed family members to be paid?

Answer from Ross:

- The interim policy to allow payment to family members was brought in during a time when there was very limited access to community and to personal protective equipment

- Things have improved since that time
- We did make some of the flexible respite options permanent in the new Family Respite Policy
- For example- you can use respite funding to hire someone to help with things like house cleaning or cooking
- You can also still pay other family members or neighbours to provide respite

Question- What is the process to get an exemption? Are there religious, or other exemptions allowed for COVID vaccinations?

Answer Dr. Behn Smith:

- There is a process for medical reasons only
- You can go to the PHO order website to fill out the medical deferral form
- This form needs to be filled out by a medical professional
- This form is submitted to the office at the PHO
- There is a team of public health officers that make decision about whether requests are approved or denied
- Each of these forms are being reviewed with a lot of care and compassion.

Question: Once staff are fully vaccinated in a group home, will they have to wear masks?

Answer from Dr. Behn Smith:

- Yes. The indoor mask order still applies to group homes
- It is helpful to have the additional layer of protection, especially with the Delta variant
- I hope we are in a different place in the Spring

Question: My son and my family are fully vaccinated but my son is not able to attend his day program because unvaccinated individuals are allowed to attend. Why are service providers still allowed to include unvaccinated individuals in their day program? What safeguards are in place to make sure individuals who are vaccinated are not getting sick?

Answer from Ross:

- CLBC cannot deny services to someone based on vaccination status
- We won't be able to get to a zero-risk situation.
- We do need service providers to still provide support to people who are not vaccinated

- I would reach out to your service provider to ask what safeguards are in place to make sure everyone is safe

Answer from Dr. Behn Smith

- Those additional layers of protection, like physical distance, masks, regular hand washing, really do help
- Your son and family are vaccinated and that means you have dramatically decreased your risk
- We are now in a situation where we have over 90% people partially vaccinated and that also decreases your risk
- You have done everything you can to protect your son with all those layers of protection

Question: If I am double vaccinated are we projected from Omicron? Or will there be a new vaccine?

Answer from Dr. Behn Smith:

- We don't yet.
- Right now, the Delta variant that makes up 100% of the virus being spread in the community
- The vaccines we have now give excellent protection for the Delta variant.

Question: CLBC eligible individuals were prioritized last Spring to receive vaccinations. Why aren't they being prioritized for booster shots between now and January?

Answer from Dr. Behn Smith:

- The most protection you can get from COVID is with those first 2 doses.
- That's why we prioritized people with developmental disabilities at that time when we needed the most protection
- The booster program is about providing a third dose of vaccine at the right time
- First, you want to get the most out of the first 2 doses
- We don't want to give the 3rd vaccine too soon
- The booster doses will come in January and later
- You will be called to get your booster some time between 6-8 months after your first shot
- When you are called it will be good timing for you

Question: If a double-vaccinated staff person has COVID symptoms prior to a shift, should they isolate and get a formal COVID test through Health prior to working a shift supporting a double-vaccinated vulnerable individual or is relying upon a negative Rapid Test result a sufficient safeguard?

Answer from Dr. Behn Smith:

- If you can, everyone should stay home if you're not feeling well
- In this situation, both people are double vaccinated, so the risk is low
- You should follow the local public health protocols for your community and/or workplace
- Rapid tests are pretty good when people are having COVID symptoms
- Rapid tests are not as reliable if you don't have symptoms

We are amazed by the resilience of individuals and families, support staff and agencies. We are all doing our very best. Thank-you for your collective effort to get through this pandemic together. Dr. Henry passes on her best wishes to everyone during this holiday season.

CLBC is committed to having another teleconference call for individuals and families in the New Year. Visit the CLBC website for more information and updates here

Feel free to submit questions at anytime to CLBCInfo@gov.bc.ca