



## **July 9th CLBC Teleconference for Families**

### **Plain Language Summary**

#### **Who were the speakers on this call?**

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

#### **Opening message from Dr. Behn Smith about what COVID-19 looks like in BC today:**

- The number of people getting COVID-19 is low.
- Most cases are in Fraser and Vancouver Coastal Health regions.
- Important to remember even if cases are low- when there is a case anywhere there is risk everywhere.
- Most new cases of COVID-19 in BC can be traced back to a known case or cluster of cases.
- We need visitors from outside of BC to follow our health and safety rules.
- We have the ability to test anyone for COVID-19 who needs or wants to be tested. Test results come back in as little as 24hrs.
- Still very important to stay home if you feel sick or have any COVID-19 symptoms.
- We have good 'contact tracing' by public health. This will help BC keep the number of cases low.
- Contact tracing is the process of contacting everyone who had direct contact with someone who tests positive for COVID-19 and asking them to self isolate to make sure they don't spread the virus.

- With good testing and contact tracing we hope to continue opening up the community and the economy so people can go back to work and back to their activities.
- Even as we open up, we still need to follow the important health measures of washing hands and cleaning surfaces and keeping a distance from others who aren't part of your household, or personal 'bubble'.
- Bubbles are the small groups of people you have decided are safe to be in direct contact with.
- If we increase our bubbles more than 65%, we could see an increase of the amount of people getting COVID-19.
- How many people you increase your bubble with should depend on your personal health and risk factors. For example- people who are over the age of 60 and/or who have health issues should have smaller bubbles compared to someone who is younger and healthy.
- It's time to start talking to your doctor or care team about what your personal risks are and what health measures will best keep you safe.

**Question: Do you recommend wearing mask in public places until we have a vaccine?**

**Answer:**

- Wearing a mask doesn't protect you from getting the virus, but it may protect someone else if you are infected with COVID-19.
- Masks are recommended if you can't keep 2 metres apart from others. For example, on public transit.
- Masks alone are NOT are not the best way to prevent COVID 19 and should always be used while still washing hands and keeping a safe distance from others who are in your bubble.
- Masks are recommended but NOT required.
- Some people cannot wear a mask and they should NOT be prevented from accessing their community and public transportation.
- Remember- the virus is spread by infected droplets and can infect someone with COVID-19 in 2 ways if you:

1. breathe in infected droplets when you are close enough to someone who has COVID-19. For example, if they sneeze or cough close to you.
2. touch a surface where infected droplets have landed and then touch your eyes, nose or mouth.

**Question: We support a 24-year-old very vulnerable individual. His parents are nervous about proceeding to Stage 2 given his staff have a very large bubble (family, other jobs, etc.). Would you recommend him staying in Stage 1 during the summer months as we live in a community that explodes with summer visitors?**

**Answer from Dr. Behn Smith:**

- Everyone's situation is unique and will need to make decisions that include the advice of your doctor or health team.
- It's important to think through the things that increase the risk of getting COVID-19.
- It's also important to think through the risks of social isolation (loneliness) and caregiver burn-out.
- Remember- the risk of getting COVID-19 goes up when you increase the number of people in your bubble AND with the contact intensity.
- Contact intensity is about how close you are with others outside your bubble and for how long you are in direct contact with those people.
- If contact intensity is low (you are a safe distance from others and not in direct contact with others outside your bubble for more than 15 minutes) the risk of getting COVID-19 goes down.
- We know that we will get summer visitors, but we are hopeful that everyone will follow the health measures of 'fewer faces in bigger spaces.'

**Question: We are a family on Vancouver Island that has chosen not to have our son go back to services because we are nervous about spread and he does not understand social distancing. We are in our 60s. Should we be nervous? What criteria would you use to consider the risks of COVID to him and us versus the**

**risks of isolation from his peers and a daily schedule that is perhaps less stimulating than when he is receiving his day services?**

**Answer from Dr. Behn Smith:**

- Age of parents is an important risk to think about.
- It's important to also think about where you are living. For example- on Vancouver Island there have been very few cases, so the risk is lower compared to places where there are more cases.
- It's important to ask questions and understand how services are happening. For example- How many people are supported at one time? Can people be kept a safe distance from each other? Is it the same staff and individuals that your son would have contact with?
- The risk of getting COVID-19 might be low enough compared to the risk of isolation and care-giver burn-out for him to return to services.
- These are personal decisions that need a lot of thought and planning.
- Talk to your family doctor to help with these decisions as they know your personal health situation the best.

**Question: My daughter is in a home share situation. It has been 4 months since I have been able to give her a hug. My daughter has 5 different caregivers who interact with her without PPE. If I provide my own PPE, what medical reasons is there for me not being able to give her a brief hug?**

**Answer from Dr. Behn Smith:**

- PPE won't reduce the risk in a big way.
- The risk is greatest when you are in contact with people who have symptoms of COVID-19.
- The risk also increases when you are in close contact for a longer period of time- over 15 minutes is considered a longer period of time.
- If neither of you have symptoms of COVID-19, there is very low risk in giving your daughter a brief hug.

**Answer from Ross Chilton:**

- If there are differences of opinion between the home share provider and the family, it is fine to ask the home share coordinator to become involved.
- It's very important that we work together and look at what is possible instead of only focusing on what we can't do.

**Question: My cousin lives in a group home with 3 other medically vulnerable individuals. He is healthy and really anxious to see his friends and family, but the group won't allow it. We aren't even allowed on the property. It feels like service providers need clear direction around appropriate and essential social and emotional needs of those they serve. My cousin hasn't had a hug in 3 months. As family member, can I ask the CLBC analyst to provide more oversight and advocacy for my cousin's mental health and well being.**

**Answer from Ross Chilton:**

- CLBC has asked service providers to put together and submit plans about how their services will work in stage 2 of service recovery.
- These plans must include guidance from the Provincial Health Office and Work Safe BC.
- These plans also have to include the input of individuals and families being supported.
- We have provided health guidance to help service providers and families figure out what is possible and how to balance risk of getting COVID-19 with the risk of isolation and loneliness.
- We need to look at what is possible instead of just saying, 'no' to families.
- Individuals and families can reach out to your local CLBC office if you need support with these conversations.

**Question: My daughter has had a job at a pharmacy for 10 years until March. She has Down Syndrome and I wondered if it is safe for her to go back to working if she's working with stocking and garbage?**

**Answer from Dr. Behn Smith:**

- These situations need to weigh the risk of getting COVID-19 with the need to get back to important routines like having a job.
- Questions to help figure out the level of risk are: How much contact with customers and staff does she have in her role? Are there ways to lower the contact intensity? For example- Can she keep her distance with others in the workplace? Will she need to be in close contact with people for longer periods of time?

**Question: Our daughter's day services are beginning to reopen but on a reduced schedule. As a family caring for our daughter with significant disabilities, we are very stressed and are beginning to burnout. Our daughter communicates through behaviours and this has not been easy on any of us. Are there any mental health and emotional support services for us as caregivers and behavioural support services for our daughter? When can we get full-time day services?**

**Answer from Ross Chilton:**

- Service providers are figuring out how to offer as much in-person support as possible without bringing together large groups of people.
- It's important to stay in regular contact with your daughter's service provider to get the best support possible during this time.
- Feel free to reach out to CLBC if you need us to help with those conversations.
- CLBC has been posting [regular weekly updates for individuals and families](#) on our website.
- These updates include mental health resources, as well as a [Support and Connection Toolkit](#) that is updated on a regular basis.
- You can subscribe to the weekly CLBC COVID-19 update [here](#).
- We will work to make it easier to find information about mental health resources on our website.
- CLBC is in process of putting together a series of sessions for families on how to support loved ones during this challenging time.

- [The Family Support Institute](#) is a very helpful and supportive organization that we encourage families to reach out to.

**Question: Community inclusion programs for people with special needs are beginning to re-open. In order to manage risks, some staff of programs are undergoing a change of clothing at the commencement of their work shift as well as frequent deep cleaning of program vehicles after each usage.**

**Answer from Dr. Behn Smith:**

- The need to change clothing is NOT something the Provincial Health Office is strongly recommending.
- No one should travel together in a vehicle if they have symptoms of COVID-19.
- The best way to reduce risk of getting COVID-19 is staying home if you are sick, cleaning surfaces, keeping a safe physical distance, putting up barriers like plexiglass if it's not possible to keep physical distance and washing hands often.
- Any worker with any symptoms of the virus must stay home.
- Any individual who has symptoms of the virus must also stay home.

**Question: Should home share providers of community inclusion participants conduct a deep cleaning of their own vehicles prior to drop-off at the community inclusion program and after pick-up at the end of the day?**

**Answer from Dr. Behn Smith:**

- It is recommended to clean parts of the vehicle that are touched often.
- It is recommended to use a hand sanitizer before individuals and staff go in and out of the program.
- No, a deep clean of every part of the car is not necessary if individuals and staff are following the above health measures.

**Question: My brother's day program still hasn't opened up. They are offering to meet him at a park or the beach for short periods of time. This requires us to do a lot of transportation back-and-forth and is not possible with our work. Can we insist that he attend the way he used to?**

**Answer from Ross Chilton:**

- Agencies provide for support to both the individual and the family.
- It is important that the agency talk with families about all the things that are possible.
- Stay in contact with your agency to figure out how they can best support both the individual and the family.
- Reach out to CLBC if you need help with these discussions.

**Question: Our daughter turned 19 in the last few months and we have requested at day program. It doesn't sound like these programs will be back full time anytime soon. What will the alternatives be for supporting our child? What should we be asking for? We have taken time off work to provide support but need to return very soon.**

**Answers from Ross Chilton:**

- No, the full re-opening of larger day programs will not happen any time soon.
- There are many examples of how service providers have adapted their programs to continue supporting individuals and their families during this time.
- Stay connected to your CLBC Facilitator and they can help you think through what is possible.

**Question: Will CLBC be creating a new kind of service approach given the new normal? How can families be involved in figuring out the innovative solutions that will need to be created given the unknown amount of time this pandemic could go on for?**

**Answer from Ross Chilton:**

- The Reimagining Community Inclusion work that started before COVID-19 is still very active.
- We are developing a plan about how we can better support community inclusion over the next 10 years. This work includes discussions with self advocates and family members.
- We will definitely be involving families and self advocates as we think about new ways to offer supports and services.

**Question: My daughter lives in home share. She has very complex health needs. Her day program has offered to have her back, but the home share provider thinks it's too risky given she also supports another individual in her home who is medically fragile. I'm torn because the day program is willing to have my daughter. Can I ask CLBC to help us figure out the best way forward and facilitate on-going risk assessments?**

**Answer from Ross Chilton:**

- if you have discussed all the possibilities of support with agency and still are unable to come to an agreement, then yes, CLBC is happy to help with discussions about the best way forward.
- We are now in a place with the pandemic that it is important to involve your doctor and health team to help with decisions and balancing the risk of getting COVID-19 with the need for support and social connection with others.
- I will be sending a letter to families soon recognizing and thanking them for all the extra support they have been providing.
- We wouldn't have done so well without the help of families.
- Stay connected to CLBC, your agency and your doctor.
- We want to make sure families are supported and not isolated.