



November 17, 2020, CLBC Teleconference for Individuals and Families **Plain Language Summary**

Who were the speakers on this call?

- Michael Prince, CLBC Board Chair
- Dr. Daniele Behn Smith, Deputy Provincial Health Officer
- John Stinson, VP Regional Operations, Community Living BC

Opening messages from Dr. Behn Smith:

We are now in our second wave of COVID-19.

Our health goals are the same:

1. Protect people who have the most risk of getting COVID-19
2. Protect our health system so we can help people when they need it.
3. Balance the harm of the public health measures and restrictions with other harms like mental health.

We have learned:

1. This virus is spread when you are physically close to someone who has COVID-19 for more than 15 minutes.
2. This virus spreads in people's home and in social networks and gatherings like dinner parties and celebrations.
3. It spreads when safety plans (physical barriers, physical distancing, small social bubbles, washing hands, wearing masks, staying home when sick...) are not being following.
4. When COVID-19 safety plan plans are being followed the virus doesn't spread.

We all need to:

- Stay at home when we are sick
- Keep our social bubbles small
- Stay physically distant from people who are not in our household
- Use non-medical masks (if you are able to) when you can't keep a safe distance.
- Follow all the COVID-19 safety plans when you are in community like grocery stores and on the bus

Opening remarks from CLBC VP, John Stinson:

- We recognize the uncertainty for self advocates and families makes this time very difficult.
- This is a hard time for many of us.
- We have not seen a big amount of COVID with the people we serve.
- We are committed to doing everything we can to support people and their families.

Question- *The numbers of cases are growing rapidly in some parts of the province. I am very worried about what this means as we approach winter and must stay indoors. What additional restrictions might we face? Will we be able to celebrate the holidays with our family?*

Answer from Dr. Behn Smith

- This will be a different kind of holiday season for all of us.
- It is now that we need to keep social contacts small and avoid in-person contact with people from outside your household.
- This virus spreads easily when people are indoors.
- We need to find virtual/online and physically distant ways to connect with one another.
- We hope a limited supply of vaccine will be coming in 2021.
- We are thinking about the most ethical way to get the vaccine out to as many people as possible.

Answer from John Stinson:

- We have heard loud and clear that families need a break to stay safe and strong through these winter months.
- We are working with our partners on more ways for families to have access to these needed breaks from caregiving.

Question- *I am finding it hard to find a mask that fits my daughter's head properly. She has Down syndrome. Tightening the loops over the ears usually means they won't stay and the mask falls off. What is the BEST mask to use for an individual such as my daughter? Is a silicone insert advisable as well? And, do the face shields really work to protect from 'aerosol' droplets? If so, would this be a better solution.*

Answer from Dr. Behn Smith:

- The Provincial Health Office is not aware of any specific masks to recommend for individuals with Down's Syndrome.
- It is important to have a face covering that doesn't get in the way of breathing and that provides a good seal around the mouth and nose.
- Using a face shield by itself is not a good way to stop the spread of the virus.
- What we know that there is less spread when people are wearing masks.
- Dr. Tam has recommended a mask with 3 layers of fabric.
- The [BC Centre for Disease Control](#) has good information about masks and face shields including a video. You can find updated information about masks on their website [here](#).
- Masks are now highly recommended for those who are able to wear one.
- We know some people are not able to wear masks. This has been backed up by the Human Rights Commissioner. You can read the statement [here](#).
- [BC transit](#) is providing cards for those who can't wear a mask.

Question- *I can't wear a mask. I will have a panic attack if I wear one. So I am staying home because I don't want to get in trouble by the bus driver or the people in the store. Is there something I can show them to prove I can't wear a mask?*

Answer from Dr. Behn Smith:

- No, we don't have something for people to show if they are not able to wear a mask.
- BC Human Rights Commissioner made a statement about the need to make accommodations for people who are not able to wear mask.
- You can print this [statement from the Human Rights Commissioner](#) and bring it with you.
- Masks alone do not protect us from COVID.
- We always need to wear a mask AND keep our distance, wash hands and have things in place like physical barriers.

Question- *I'm scared the COVID test will hurt and I've heard there are other tests that don't hurt. How do I get the one that doesn't hurt?*

Answer from Dr. Behn Smith:

- The COVID test doesn't feel great.
- There are a number of different kinds of tests that are being made.
- But we don't have enough of these tests available for everyone.
- There is a saline gargle test available for school aged children.
- You can visit the BC Centre for Disease Control website [here](#) for the most up to date information about testing, the different kinds of test available and where they are available.

Question- *We hear that when a person has tested positive in hospitals and long term care, they are testing everyone involved on that particular unit or floor. Will asymptomatic employees and vulnerable supported individuals in group homes or home sharing qualify for Covid tests if an employee or supported individual has tested positive in the home?*

Answer from Dr. Behn Smith:

- Asymptomatic is a word to describe people who are **not** showing symptoms of COVID, but who could still be carrying the virus and pass it on to others.
- Asymptomatic testing is doing a COVID test when someone doesn't have any symptoms.
- Asymptomatic testing is NOT very good at picking up whether people have COVID or not.
- It is up to the medical officer involved to decide whether or not it is necessary to test asymptomatic people who may have been in contact with someone who has COVID.

Question- *I think I have symptoms and need to get tested. But if I leave my house to get tested then I might pass it on to someone else. I don't have anyone who can drive me. Will they come and test me at my house? What can I do?*

Answer from Dr. Behn Smith:

- If you are wondering if you should get a test there are a couple things you can do:
 1. Do the BC COVID self assessment [here](#).
 2. You can also download BC COVID support app for your phone or other device. Click [here](#) for more info about this app.
 3. Call 811 and talk to a nurse about your symptoms.
- If you have COVID symptoms it is important to get tested.
- You can wear a face covering/mask, keep your distance from others and use transit to get to a testing station nearest to you.
- Different health authorities have mobile services that may be able to help. Find out what is available in your community by visiting the BC Centre for Disease Control testing page [here](#).
- Inclusion BC has an advocacy help line and can assist you to figure out your options- 1-844-488-4321

Question- *Are respite contractors considered an essential service? Can they keep working with families even with restrictions in place?*

Answer from Dr. Behn Smith:

- Yes, we would consider respite workers an essential service that can keep working with families even during restrictions.

Question- *We do not have CLBC respite funding but my daughter does have individualized funding through a Host Agency which pays for her Community Inclusion supports. We have some unused hours built up because she has not had as many support hours due to COVID-related issues. My husband and I could use a break. Can we use some of our IF funds now designated for Community Inclusion for some respite?*

Answer from John Stinson:

- Yes, CLBC would support this.
- Reach out to your host agency and make sure they are aware of your needs and can work with you to do this.
- If families manage their individualized funding themselves then it would be important to reach out to your CLBC analyst to make this kind of request.

Question- *We really need respite. We are scared to have anyone in our home. It's too much of a risk. But we can't carry on like this without a break very soon. Can the PHO put into place a testing program for respite workers so they can be tested quickly so families can feel safe bringing them into our homes?*

Answer from:

- Asymptomatic testing (testing when someone does not feel sick or have symptoms) is not very good at picking up whether or not people have COVID.
- This means a testing program for respite workers wouldn't reduce the risk for your family.

- We all need a break to care for ourselves.
- None of us can get our risk down to 0.
- It's important to work with your respite provider to find ways that will give you a break with as little risk as possible.

Question- *What process is in place in order for a parent to be assessed as an Essential Visitor in the case where their son/daughter is experiencing significant emotional and psychological distress due to visits being eliminated both inside and outside of the CLBC funded group home?*

Answer from John Stinson:

- These kinds of situations need to be worked out between the family and with the group home where their son/daughter lives.
- We need to find ways to support our agencies to stay to their COVID safety plans so those we care about and the staff are as safe as possible.
- Different group homes are supporting individuals with different levels of risk.
- We need our service provider staff to stay safe and to help keep the numbers down, especially those who support very medical fragile individuals.

Answer from Dr. Behn Smith:

- It is very hard to find the right balance between the harm and distress of not having social connections and the risk of getting and spreading the virus.
- Provincially there is a visitor policy for hospitals – but each individual setting and situation needs to be thought about carefully for the safety of everyone.
- If you are not able to get to an agreeable understanding it is important to know where you can get help to work through these difficult situations.

Question: *Our service provider has worked very hard to provide a safe environment during the pandemic for as many individuals as possible. Some of the*

staff insist, however, that doors and windows in the building must be open at all times. What is a good, healthy and safe balance for ventilation while staying warm and comfortable?

Answer from Dr. Behn Smith:

- We don't yet have the science around ventilation (air flow in and out of an indoor space) that tells us what the right balance is.
- We do know that indoor closed spaces are settings where the virus spreads.
- This means it is important that indoor spaces have good ventilation, or air flow.
- The Work safe BC website has a *COVID-19 frequently asked questions: General ventilation and air circulation* [here](#) that might be helpful.

Stay tuned for the next CLBC Teleconference for Individuals and Families
Remember to submit your questions in advance to CLBCinfo@gov.bc.ca

Thank-you!