

STATEMENT OF POLICY AND PROCEDURE			
Section		Policy #:	
Subject:	Coronavirus (COVID – 19) Pandemic Policy	Effective:	August 2020
Approved by:	Executive Director	Date Approved:	July 2020
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Policy: Coronavirus Pandemic

This *Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic Policy* includes the measures Toronto North Support Services (TNSS) is actively taking to mitigate the spread of coronavirus. Toronto North Support Services expects all staff, contractors, students and volunteers to follow the procedures described within this policy in order to sustain a healthy and safe work environment in this unique circumstance.

Toronto North Support Services is at all times committed to fair and equitable treatment of staff in meeting the service demands of our clients and the larger health care community. During public health emergencies, the agency will strive to balance the needs of clients, staff and the greater community.

DEFINITIONS

Pandemic: An outbreak that occurs over a wide geographic area and affects a high proportion of the population.

Pandemic Declaration: The Chief Medical Officer of Health of Ontario with the approval of the Ontario legislature declares an emergency under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act and it remains in place as extended or revoked by the Chief Medical Officer.

Stages 1-3: Businesses, services and public spaces will reopen in Ontario on a regional basis in three stages based on which businesses and spaces are best positioned to follow the province of Ontario’s public health and workplace safety measures as progress is made in preventing the spread of COVID-19. TNSS will follow the province of Ontario’s guidance around progressing through these stages.

Procedure

The Agency has implemented the following measures to protect staff members and their co-workers from a potential coronavirus infection.

1. Assessing Health Human Resources

Mental health and addiction services have been identified by the Ministry of Health as essential services that must continue to operate during a pandemic. The agency may take any reasonable measures to respond to, prevent and alleviate an outbreak and prioritize client services. This includes, but is not limited to, the authority to do the following:

- Require and collect information from staff or contractors about their availability to provide services
- Identify staffing priorities and develop, modify and implement internal redeployment plans;
- Conduct skills and experience inventories of staff in order to identify possible alternative roles in priority areas;
- Require information from staff members related to any health conditions that may affect their ability to provide services or put them at heightened risk
- Require the provision of and collect information from staff or contractors about their likely or actual exposure to the virus
- Cancel or postpone services that are not related to responding to, preventing or alleviating the outbreak
- Defer or cancel vacations, absences or other leaves
- Consider strategies to optimize the utilization of staff to respond to care needs

TNSS will strive to balance the needs of clients, staff and the greater community through ethical, equitable and transparent decision making and timely communications with all staff. Staff are expected to continue to work with their clients and communicate with their managers to assess the needs of clients and develop care plans to meet those needs. We will continue to assess the health human resources required to increase care activity. This includes planning for both in-office and remote staff.

Accommodation: During a pandemic, illness or medical vulnerabilities may prevent an employee from fulfilling the essential duties of their position for a temporary period. TNSS will endeavour to provide accommodations to employees who are at heightened risk. The type of work, location or schedule may be adjusted for a period of time, taking into consideration the staff member's health status and/or childcare obligations. Should work from home not be an option due to the nature of the individual's position, accommodation may include such actions as a short-term leave of absence.

- Employees should contact their Manager or the HR Manager if they have an accommodation need. Each request will be evaluated individually. Employees will be asked to disclose the particulars of their need for accommodation. Timelines for all accommodations will be reviewed regularly.

Redeployment: During a pandemic, it may be necessary to move staff around within the agency in order to adequately staff high priority services.

- Internal redeployments are put in place when management determines that there are outstanding staffing needs in a particular area. It is the expectation of the agency that all staff will cooperate and support internal redeployments in order to best meet client needs.
- External redeployments may be possible when other health system partners or services make a request for staffing or resource assistance. The Executive Director may support these requests by asking staff to come forward for voluntary redeployment. At all times staff remain employees of Toronto North Support Services.

Under extreme circumstances, redeployment may be an expectation of any staff member. In such cases, the provincial government would be required to pass an Order in Council under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act or Health Protection and Promotion Act, requiring third party providers to redeploy staff, and requiring employees to cooperate. Toronto North Support Services would not support involuntary redeployment except where mandated by law, under these extreme circumstances.

In all situation of redeployment, the agency would make every reasonable effort to put training and safety precautions into place.

The Occupation Health and Safety Act (OHSA) remains of paramount importance and the safety of staff is of utmost concern. The Act contains provisions that workers may refuse work if they believe that the physical condition of the workplace is likely to endanger the employee. Employers have a general duty to take “every precaution reasonable in the circumstances” for the protection of a worker. The determination of what is “reasonable in the circumstances” is not a static decision but must be continually assessed in consultation with the employer’s internal and external stakeholders, taking into account all relevant information at the particular time and best practice recommendations. TNSS Services must also ensure that staff feel safe and trust the measures being taken to protect them by providing timely training and education.

Involuntary redeployment, should it occur, does not in and of itself give rise to the right to refuse work. Staff would receive training and PPE as appropriate to the position they are being redeployed to. If, once in the position, a staff member felt that conditions were unsafe, an appeal could be made and possibly give rise to a right to refuse work under the OHSA.

2. Maximizing services that appropriately reduce in-person visits using virtual care

During Stage 1 of a pandemic, client visits will be conducted virtually whenever possible and appropriate. Under certain circumstances, staff may need to continue to do in-person client visits. These will be scheduled only when:

- The type of care being provided requires it
- The client requires it

- The client does not have access to technology that permits the safe delivery of virtual care (e.g. a personal device, secure internet connection)

Physical distancing and masking procedures must be observed during in-person visits with clients.

All visits to agency offices will be restricted to staff and those trades that are required in order to continue to provide services, e.g. cleaning, pest control. Only individuals who have self-screened and are not experiencing symptoms will be allowed to enter an agency office.

During Stages 2 and 3, in-person visiting can be ramped up with guidance from the Emergency Response Team and with proper IPAC processes in place. Those clients who can be effectively maintained with virtual care should continue to receive this until the risk level is reduced. The Emergency Response Team will provide guidance on an ongoing basis at regular All-staff meetings.

Client visits in an agency office are restricted to exceptional circumstances and must be approved by a manager prior to the client entering the premises.

Transporting Clients: There may be instances when staff deem it necessary to transport clients in their own or agency vehicles. Staff are encouraged to do so only when all other options have been considered and after consulting with their manager. Appropriate PPE MUST be used when transporting clients.

3. Implementing infection prevention and control procedures for Stage 2 and 3

Physical distancing: The nature of COVID-19 requires individuals to maintain a minimum distance of approximately two metres from one another. This can be accomplished through working remotely, limiting the number of staff who can access an agency office at any given time, and instructing staff and clients to keep their distance from each other whenever possible.

- Each office will have the maximum number of staff permitted to work onsite at any given time posted on the front door of each site.
- Staff working onsite will be required to sign in and sign out using the sheets placed at the reception area. Two pen bins (one for clean pens and one for used pens) will be placed at the reception area of each site in order to safely facilitate staff signing-in and signing-out of offices.
- Staff are encouraged to work with their managers to limit the number of staff working onsite at any given time at any of the Agency's office locations by adhering to the site's schedule (e.g. *Railside Case Managers Schedule*).

- The Manager on duty is responsible for ensuring that the maximum number of staff permitted to work onsite at any given time is not exceeded.
- Common areas where people are prone to congregate (e.g. photocopiers, kitchen) will have markers on the floors reminding staff to maintain a distance of at least two metres.
- Receptions areas will be retrofitted with plexiglass and an individual will be assigned to track attendance at each office each day.

Limited door access: Staff are to limit door access to the designated front door for each site, and to sign in and out regularly. This is important so that contact tracing can be done should an individual who has accessed an office become symptomatic.

Working from home: Staff working from home may assist the organization to create greater distance and reduce the chances of any staff member getting sick. Working from home can only be implemented to the degree that it is possible to meet client needs virtually. It may not be realistic for all positions to be done remotely, or for all responsibilities of any one position to be done remotely. Some staff may still be required to work onsite or in the community.

- Staff working from home must ensure they maintain a professional work ethics and standards. A decline in performance, as determined by the staff member's manager, may be grounds for cancelling the work from home arrangement. Work from home arrangements are specific to a state of emergency and do not continue beyond the event. Staff working remotely, are required to report changes to health, the health of family members, close contacts and clients.
- Management staff share in the responsibility for ensuring that essential services continue. As such, they are expected to provide both support and instrumental assistance to program staff. These responsibilities may require them to work from an agency office, pick up or deliver needed supplies or equipment, or take on tasks usually done by others.

Working from multiple TNSS sites: Staff may be permitted to work at multiple TNSS office locations based on the approval from the most appropriate manager. Staff members will be required to comply with the safety protocols that are specific to the site where they work from.

Working at external organizations: In the event that a staff member is also employed with an external organization, the staff member should work with their manager to develop a safety plan for working at multiple organizations.

Travel: Staff are required to discuss travel plans with their manager prior to visiting locations outside of Ontario. When travelling within Ontario, staff are required to follow the most current provincial guidelines.

Personal Protective Equipment and Hand Hygiene: Staff will receive training on hand hygiene and the use of appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE). The Agency will ensure

supplies of PPE, masks and hand sanitizer are provided to any staff who is expected to go out into the community or come into an agency office.

Signage: Signage will be posted on the entry door and throughout the Agency to prompt anyone to self-identify if they feel unwell or screen positive for symptoms of COVID-19. Additional signage will be posted throughout the Agency as reminders to exercise best practices related to infection prevention and control including but not limited to maintaining physical distancing, mask requirements, sanitizing work areas, adhering to hand hygiene guidelines, and respiratory etiquette.

Mask Requirements: Non-medical double layered masks in addition to hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette and physical distancing are required while on-site in Agency offices. All staff are required wear surgical masks during in-person visits with clients.

- Staff are required to change or dispose of masks used while travelling via public transportation upon entering any of the TNSS offices.
- While onsite at any of the agency's locations, staff seated at a workstation with barriers on both sides – may conduct activities such as talking to clients over the phone without a mask.
- While onsite at any of the agency's locations, staff are required to wear a mask (surgical or double layered cloth) whenever maintaining a minimum distance of approximately 2 metres may not be possible (e.g. moving around within indoor office spaces and approaching a colleague's workstation or a meeting room)
- Staff are required to wear a surgical mask when in contact with clients (in the office and in the community) and must dispose of surgical masks after contact with each client.
- As an extra precaution, face shields will be provided to staff who want to use them in addition to wearing either surgical or double layered cloth masks
- Clients should be encouraged to wear surgical or non-medical masks during in-person visits, especially when they may not be able to consistently maintain a physical distance of at least two metres from others.

Screening: Screening must include asking about symptoms known to be associated with the outbreak, as well as exposure risks. If an individual has symptoms at screening, they should be told to self-isolate, encouraged to complete Ontario's self-assessment tool, and contact either their family physician or Telehealth Ontario (1 866 797-0000).

- **Screening before scheduling an in-person appointment:** All clients should be screened, by phone if possible, using the *Toronto North Support Services COVID-19 Screening Tool* before scheduling an appointment. Staff should also ask about any other person who will be present during the appointment.
- **Screening before proceeding with an in-person appointment:** Screening should take place immediately before all in-person interactions with everyone who will be present during the appointment.

- **Staff members are to self-screen** Staff are required to self-screen and submit a self-screening attestation every day (except on weekends or while on vacation) using the *Daily Covid-19 Self-Assessment*. Submitted *Daily Covid-19 Self-Assessment* screening reports will be recorded and received by the most appropriate manager and managers will need to account for any incomplete reports.

Positive screening; Staff members who become unwell at work should tell their manager immediately and separate themselves from others. They will be sent home, avoiding public transit, and advised to contact their primary care provider or Telehealth to discuss next steps. The *Toronto North Support Service Covid-19 Self-Isolation Tracking Form* should be filled out within the same day and provided to their manager.

- Staff who have been advised to self-isolate should discuss this with their manager. Any staff member who believes they may have COVID-19 is encouraged to seek testing as soon as possible, informing the testing centre that they are an essential worker. The results of the test should be communicated promptly to their manager and/or the Manager of HR.
- Following a positive self-screening for Covid-19 symptoms and following the direction of Toronto Public Health guidelines, staff should get a Covid-19 test and only return to in-person or on-site work after receiving a negative test result and being 24 hours symptom free.
- A client who becomes unwell during an appointment should be isolated in a space away from others and assisted to contact their family physician or telehealth. Should a client develop severe symptoms, staff should call 911.

Reporting Positive Screening: COVID-19 is a designated disease of public health significance and thus reportable under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act*.

Enhanced Cleaning and Disinfecting: In addition to routine cleaning, staff will be assigned tasks related to cleaning and disinfecting all high touch surfaces twice a day and when visibly dirty. These enhanced cleaning measures will be recorded daily using the *TNSS Cleaning Log* located on the administrative drive. Staff will also be encouraged to wipe down personal workstations between weekly deep cleanings by contracted professional.

Guiding Legislation

- Health Protection and Promotion Act
- Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act
- Occupational Health and Safety Act
- Workplace Safety and Insurance Act
- Regulated Health Professions Act
- Employment Standards Act