

**Subject:** COVID-19 Response and Business Continuity in Community Services

**Date:** August 4, 2020

**To:** Public Health & Social Services Committee

**From:** Adrienne Jugley, Commissioner, Community Services

This memo provides continued updates on the measures Community Services has taken to ensure the ongoing delivery of essential services during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the alternate approaches used to support those most vulnerable in Niagara.

**Seniors Services – Long-Term Care**

*Resident Visiting*

The Province of Ontario announced that long-term care homes can move to the next stage of resident visiting. Outdoor visit parameters have loosened and indoor visiting programs have been permitted as of July 22, 2020. The following visit protocols are being operationalized across all Niagara Region Long-term Care Homes:

<b>Indoor Visits</b>	<b>Outdoor Visits</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All visits must be scheduled</li> <li>• Two visitors permitted at a time</li> <li>• Each visitor must pass active screening (including taking temperature) prior to the visit</li> <li>• Each visitor must complete COVID-19 testing within 14 days of the visit and provide attestation of a negative result</li> <li>• Each visitor is required to bring and wear a mask</li> <li>• Each visitor will be required to follow infection prevention and control measures including using hand sanitizer and ensuring physical distancing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All visits must be scheduled</li> <li>• Two visitors permitted at a time</li> <li>• Each visitor must pass active screening (including taking temperature) prior to the visit</li> <li>• Visitors will no longer be required to complete COVID-19 testing prior to visiting</li> <li>• Each visitor will be provided a surgical mask to wear by the home and must wear the mask throughout the time in the home</li> <li>• Each visitor will be required to follow infection prevention and control measures including using</li> </ul>

Indoor Visits	Outdoor Visits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Designated visiting areas will be disinfected between visits</li> </ul>	hand sanitizer and ensuring physical distancing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Designated visiting areas will be disinfected between visits</li> </ul>

Homes continue to provide window visits, telephone and FaceTime visits to support those families who are unable to come into the home. Please note that if a home enters into an outbreak all non-essential visitations are suspended.

### *Linhaven Outbreak*

Linhaven Long-Term Care Home was declared in COVID-19 outbreak by Public Health on July 11, 2020 due to the identification of positive cases through bi-monthly surveillance testing of staff, as mandated by the Province. At the time of declaration, staff quickly implemented all necessary outbreak measures (e.g. heightened surveillance, increased PPE requirements, resident self-isolation, etc.). Subsequent surveillance testing of all residents resulted in a small number of residents, who were asymptomatic, similarly testing positive.

*Shortly after receiving these results, these positive cases (staff and residents) were retested twice and received two negative results.*

On July 14, 2020, a different symptomatic employee tested positive for COVID-19. In light of outbreak measures already in effect within the home, the risks associated with transmission to residents or other staff, related to this case, is considered low. At the time of writing this memo, there remains one staff positive case, no resident cases and the anticipated date of which the outbreak will be declared over is July 29, 2020.

Staff continue to work diligently with Public Health and have received direction to lift some of the restriction measures. All families and residents have been provided regular communication updates throughout the duration of the declared outbreak.

### **Homelessness Services & Community Engagement**

Homelessness Services continues to operate the full emergency shelter system, overflow hotel rooms, the self-isolation facility and an enhanced street outreach service. As of July 22, 2020, 131 individuals have been referred to the isolation facility with testing results, to date, negative.

## **Children's Services**

Effective July 27, 2020, the Ministry of Education will permit all licensed child care centres to move from the current capped classroom size of 10 (includes children and staff), to a classroom size of 15 children, excluding staff. While the increase in classroom size is welcome news for families seeking to access licensed child care, it is anticipated that licensed child care service providers will likely struggle to quickly increase capacity due to a shortage of qualified staff. The screening of children and enhanced cleaning and disinfecting protocols are placing further stress on staffing capacity of many licensed child care centres that were already facing staffing shortages prior to the pandemic.

As of July 20, 2020, the total number of child care spaces available is 1,477, across 55 licensed child care centres and 53 home child care providers across Niagara. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a total of 11,595 licensed child care spaces in 169 centres and 90 home based providers across Niagara. At this time, there is approximately 10 percent of licensed child care spaces operating from the overall licensed child care system.

Children's Services is working with Public Health and both local school boards to better understand how the various learning models being considered for the school year will impact the child care system, as approximately 60% of child care centres are located in Niagara schools. Additionally, there are 94 before and after school care programs located in schools, which access shared space (classrooms, gymnasium, washrooms) that will also be impacted by these plans.

## **Social Assistance & Employment Opportunities (Ontario Works)**

As of July 20, 2020, three of five SAEO offices resumed scheduled in-person appointments (St. Catharines, Welland and Niagara Falls offices). SAEO's re-entry plan is a staged approach beginning with the introduction of a blended service delivery model to respond to the needs of high-risk individuals (e.g. those experiencing or at-risk of homelessness, those living with mental illness and/or addictions, etc.), and continues to prioritize the health and safety of staff and clients through enhanced infection prevention and control measures. Specific measures include plexi-glass at points of contact, IPads for screening upon entry to the buildings, newly designed interview stations that maintains the two metres required for physical distancing, enhanced cleaning protocols, and signage, floor decals and directional queuing for staff and clients.

SAEO continues to develop a comprehensive contingency plan to respond to a potential increase in demand for social assistance, once the federal Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) has ended.

### **Niagara Regional Housing (NRH)**

NRH continues to develop recovery plans to support the re-introduction of all services (including in-suite maintenance beyond emergency/life-safety measures, unit inspections, in-person supports and community programs), and identify and offer additional supports to vulnerable tenants. Common rooms located in multi-unit buildings are now open during High Heat alerts, with guidelines posted and enhanced cleaning and disinfection protocols in place.

Outdoor activities and summer camps in select NRH public housing communities have been made available to tenants using a hybrid model of service delivery (i.e. in-person activities and take-home activity kits).

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