

COVID-19 UPDATE

Keeping You Safe



To: All Hospital staff

From: Amy Carr, Director, Human Resources and Rose Lazinski, Manager, Occupational Health and Safety

Date: March 25, 2020

RE: **Human Resource and Occupational Health and Safety COVID-19 Policies**

As the COVID-19 pandemic evolves rapidly, the situation puts extra pressure on staff. Thank you to the many people who have already gone above and beyond the call of duty in terms of responding, planning, redeploying, cancelling vacations and staying informed.

This information will support you to understand the human resource and occupational health and safety related policies to support staff during the COVID-19 pandemic. Please note that these guidelines are subject to regular updates as we receive your questions and as the situation changes. You will be notified of changes/updates as they occur.

Please note that staff of the Thunder Bay Regional Health Research Institute and the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Foundation should confirm the following information with their managers.

Vacation

Q. I have cancelled my travel plans; can I cancel my scheduled vacation?

A. You can request to cancel your vacation and this can be approved at the discretion of your Manager. If your shifts have already been replaced you may be assigned to alternate work based on needs. Collective agreement rules will apply for re-selection of your vacation dates.

Q. Can my Manager cancel my scheduled vacation?

A. The Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act gives Hospitals the ability to cancel vacations, but we will not cancel vacation unless it becomes necessary in circumstances where needed to ensure safe, quality health care during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Q. Can I still request vacation?

A. Yes, we would allow staff to request vacation as per our normal practices. As usual, approval is at the Manager's discretion based on staffing needs.

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Remote Work

Q. Can I work from home/remotely?

A. We are encouraging remote work and/or flexible work schedules to allow for physical distancing where possible. Due to the nature of patient care work, there are limited circumstances where an employee can work from home.

Teams are asked to consider options taking into consideration service delivery, hours of work, use of technology, privacy, and safety. If remote work is not possible, consider ways to reorganize the work space or work schedules to allow for physical distancing.

If a remote work or flexible schedule is possible, your Leader has the forms and guidelines needed to implement such agreements.

Child Care/Caregiver Responsibilities

Q. What if I cannot attend work due to child/family caregiver responsibilities?

A. We know that having a contingency plan for child care may be challenging right now. If there are no reasonable alternatives, you may request an unpaid leave of absence. See policy HR-cba-04 for details. To help employees minimize wage loss during childcare/caregiver responsibility period an employee may request a payout of overtime/stat or current year vacation banks, if available.

As a result of the state of emergency declared and in order to support health care and frontline workers during the COVID-19 outbreak, Ontario plans to exempt certain licensed child care centres from the order to close. Some local emergency child care for essential health care workers will likely be available soon.

Q. Can I modify my hours of work to accommodate my child/family caregiver responsibility?

A. You can make a request for modified hours of work related to child/family caregiver responsibilities to be approved at the discretion of your Manager based on operational needs. Any such agreements that extend beyond normal working hours must be approved in consultation with Human Resources.

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Occupational Health and Safety

All staff are reminded to heighten hand hygiene practices while at work and at home, use proper cough etiquette, practice social distancing, change out of uniforms before going home, wash uniforms separately from other laundry and change uniforms daily.

COVID-19 Definitions:

NEW OR WORSENING COUGH: A new cough that is consistently happening throughout the day (not due to a chronic condition).

PROBABLE CASE: A person with fever (over 38 degrees Celsius) and/or onset of cough AND traveled internationally within 14 days prior to onset of illness; close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19.

INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL: Travel beyond national boundaries. This including short trips across the border to Minnesota (eg: to Ryden's Store).

SELF-ISOLATION: The federal government has instructed Canadians to stay quarantined at home if they have travelled outside the country within the past 14 days. This means you must stay home and avoid all contact with other people.

CLOSE CONTACT: Is defined as a person who provided direct care without PPE for a COVID-19 confirmed patient and/or close contact with a person who is a confirmed or suspected COVID-19 patient.

Q. What do I do if I am returning to Canada after international travel?

A. All staff who have traveled anywhere outside of Canada **MUST** self-isolate for a period of 14 days upon return. Inform Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) the date that you returned to Canada **at 684-6212 or ohs@tbh.net**. OHS, in consultation with Public Health will determine when you can return to work. If you develop symptoms, call the Thunder Bay District Health Unit at 625-5900.

Q. What if I travelled outside of Canada on or after March 14, 2020?

A. Staff who made the choice to travel outside of Canada on or after March 14, 2020 **MUST** self-isolate for a period of 14 days upon return and **will not be compensated** by the Hospital for the mandatory 14 day isolation period.

Staff may be eligible for employment insurance (EI) benefits. To help employees minimize wage loss during their period of self-isolation, an employee may request a payout of overtime/stat or vacation banks, if available. Please note that a pay-out of overtime/stat or vacation banks may affect (EI) benefits and it is the responsibility of the employee to

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determine eligibility.

Q. What travel is okay at this time?

A. Community spread of COVID-19 has occurred in other cities in Canada; any non-essential travel outside of Northwestern Ontario could pose a risk to yourself, your family, Thunder Bay and the Hospital. To keep our hospital and our community safe, we are requesting that you do not travel anywhere outside of Northwestern Ontario if you don't have to.

Q. What if I develop symptoms of Covid-19 but have not traveled outside of Canada or had contact with anyone with a confirmed case of COVID-19?

A. Staff who have symptoms associated with COVID-19 but have NO travel history and NO confirmed contact with a known case of COVID-19 should follow the normal procedures for requesting sick leave and monitor their symptoms.

Q. What if I've had contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19?

A. Staff who have symptoms consistent with COVID-19 and have come into contact with a self-isolated individual or a known infected individual should self-isolate, and contact the Thunder Bay District Health Unit for further direction.

Q. What precautions should people with immunodeficiency take?

A. Most people with immunodeficiency and those on medications that suppress their immune system are considered to be at greater risk for respiratory infections. Regular precautions should be taken. Consult with OH&S to discuss an appropriate work setting if required.

Q. Does pregnancy pose any greater risk with regards to COVID-19?

A. The Public Health Agency of Canada has indicated that there is no evidence that those who are pregnant are at greater risk. Evidence shows that those in the first and second trimester are actually at lower risk than the general population.

Q. Do I need to be Mask Fit Tested for an N95 respirator?

A. In an effort to protect our supply of N95 respirators, the Occupational Health & Safety department will be conducting a risk assessment for all staff who have a scheduled appointment or request to be fit tested for an N95 respirator, effective immediately.

The risk assessment will include a series of questions relating to scope of work that will determine your risk level and whether a fit is warranted at this time.

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Staff who may perform aerosol generating procedures (i.e. endo tracheal intubation, CPR, open airway suctioning, bronchoscopy, surgery/autopsy, sputum induction, non-invasive positive pressure ventilation for acute respiratory failure, high flow oxygen therapy), as well as staff providing direct patient care to airborne-isolated patients, and those required to clean the rooms of such patients will be considered high risk and top priority.

N95 respirators should only be used when/where required during this pandemic. For questions specific to risk level and N95 masks please contact 684-6421.

Thank you for your understanding and commitment to safety.

For additional information, please contact your manager, and Occupational Health and Safety at 684-6212.

Please contact TBDHU for more information regarding COVID-19 screening at 625-5900 or 1-888-294-6630 or www.tbdhu.com/coronavirus. More information is also available at <https://files.ontario.ca/moh-coronavirus-info-sheet-english-2020-02-18.pdf>

All Hospital COVID-19 updates are available on the iNtranet at <https://comms.tbrhsc.net/covid-19-information/>.