

COVID-19 UPDATE

Keeping You Safe



To: All Staff and Professional Staff

From: Dr. Rhonda Crocker Ellacott, President & CEO, TBRHSC, and CEO, TBRHRI
Dr. Peter Voros, COVID-19 Incident Manager

Date: April 29, 2021

RE: **Redeployment Update**

For more than a year, you all have served our communities with compassion, determination and professionalism during a global pandemic that hasn't been seen in more than 100 years. We are keenly aware that staff and professional staff are exhausted. You have gone above and beyond what you most likely signed up for when you chose a career in health care. We can't thank you enough for these incredible efforts.

While vaccinations are rolling out and there are indications that an end to this pandemic is visible somewhere in the distance, there is more to do. As you know, we are one part of a provincial health care system. That means when we need help as we have from time to time, our colleagues in other parts of Ontario lend a hand in any way they can. When they need our help, we are there for them – and that is where we are at the moment.

As you are aware, the third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic has taken hold in southern Ontario. As a part of the provincial health care system, we have started receiving transfers of critically ill patients from other parts of the province. At the same time, we must prepare for a potential third wave in our own region.

With this in mind, it will be necessary to delay some services in order to manage staffing coverage in the area of the greatest need. The ability to respond to this ever-changing environment with swiftness and flexibility is essential to safely care for our patients and support the Provincial response to the COVID-19 pandemic. As we have seen throughout the pandemic, success is often dictated by an organization's ability to pivot fast.

Hospitals throughout Ontario, including Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre, are using necessary measures to safely and efficiently redeploy staff to the areas of greatest need, without restriction or delay. This may include:

- changing the assignment of work, including assigning non-bargaining unit employees to perform bargaining unit work;
- changing the work schedule or shift;
- deferring or cancelling vacations, absences or other leaves;
- employing extra part-time or temporary staff or contractors.

Leaders are asked to evaluate operations and staffing levels to identify staff who could be made available for redeployment to an area of greater need. We currently have staff

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supporting the ICU, Assessment Center, Vaccination Clinic and Care Partner Liaison roles through redeployment. To date, the Hospital has endeavoured to fill these staffing needs through voluntary redeployment. We are appreciative of staff who have risen to the occasion and voluntarily provided support to these areas. However, mandatory reassignments may be necessary as the needs increase, particularly from areas where services are ramped down.

We understand these challenges bring uncertainty, however we want to assure you that our standard of care is always a top priority. Each employee has a professional obligation to escalate any concerns they feel may be impacting their ability to meet professional standards and their ability to provide quality safe patient care. If any employee feels that they cannot meet their professional standards, and/or patient safety and wellbeing is compromised, these issues must be reported to the appropriate individual within the health care team. Again, our standard of care is always a top priority.

We also want to ensure every employee has the support they need to succeed in their redeployment assignment. Any employee who may require training or education to perform the required work is encouraged to speak with their Manager and/or Professional Practice Lead. Resources related to redeployment are also available through various regulatory bodies and union websites. Any individual reassigned who is unfamiliar to an area will be supported with education, training, and a “Buddy System” to ensure a smooth transition.

We recognize this third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic is creating unprecedented burdens on our health system and on each of you personally. We want to again acknowledge our entire team for their responsiveness, professionalism, and commitment during these challenging times.

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