



Provincial Health Officer Statement for Employers on Transitioning from COVID-19 Safety Plans to Communicable Disease Plans

June 17, 2021

British Columbians have worked very hard and sacrificed much to deal with COVID-19. Due to this effort, including very good immunization uptake, the data show us that we are in a good position right now. Hospitalizations, outbreaks, clusters and cases in our community are declining. Immunization is climbing, with over 75% of adults immunized. Vaccine uptake, including second doses continues to be strong. What we need to do now is take the next careful steps forward.

Throughout the pandemic public health has been working closely with WorkSafeBC to protect workers and the public. Given the positive results for workplaces, we are going to build on the lessons learned from implementation of COVID-19 specific safety plans, which have provided important guidance for employers, and move to incorporating the important principles of communicable disease prevention into all workplaces.

To support this transition, I am advising that employers start shifting from COVID-19 Safety Plans to develop communicable disease plans as we move away from the need to focus on COVID-19 alone. This will assist employers and workers to move to step 3 of the BC Restart plan as we head into the summer, and will prepare us well for the fall and winter seasons of respiratory and other communicable diseases to come, including COVID-19.

Moving from a COVID-19 Safety Plan to communicable disease plans means:

- The COVID-19 specific controls of the COVID-19 Safety Plan will no longer be required outside of instances of elevated risk.
- Employers must ensure that fundamental measures of communicable disease prevention are in place at their workplace, including appropriate handwashing and personal hygiene practices, appropriate ventilation, and staying home when sick.
- Employers must also be prepared to implement or maintain additional measures at times when the risk of communicable disease in their region or workplace is elevated, as advised and directed by public health. More information will be provided by WorkSafeBC.

I am also recommending to employers that they maintain some of their current COVID-19 Safety Plan protocols, specifically those that do not negatively impact business operations. This may include barriers already erected in the workplace or directional signage to reduce points of congestion, as examples. This will allow for a transitional period and progression from COVID-19 Safety Plans to communicable disease plans.

To achieve this change, I have requested that WorkSafeBC continue to work with public health and engage with employers and labour to develop guidance that employers can use to replace their COVID-19 Safety Plan when BC takes the next step in its Restart plan in July. This will be achieved through application of basic risk reduction principles as part of communicable disease plans that will reduce the risk of not only COVID-19 transmission at their workplace, but of all communicable diseases that affect workplaces.

More information will be coming from public health and WorkSafeBC soon to support employers and workers to make this important transition.

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