BC PUBLIC SERVICE COVID-19 RESPONSE OVERVIEW

Updated May 6, 2020

As government continues to coordinate the provincial response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we know many BC Public Service employees also have concerns about ensuring their own health and safety. The most current information specific to the BC Public Service is available on the MyHR website, but this document provides a summary of the key things you need to know.

WHAT WE ARE DOING

• Following the Provincial Health Officer’s lead. We are ensuring the decisions we make about government operations and the workplace align with the direction of the Provincial Health Officer (PHO) to address the outbreak here in B.C. As this direction changes, we will adapt our approach. Because things can change quickly, we might not always be able to provide the answers you need right away. But we’ll do our best to provide as much certainty as we can.

• Continuing to serve. Under the provincial state of emergency, on March 26 government and the Provincial Health Officer identified essential services as those daily services essential to preserving life, health, public safety and basic societal functioning. This includes all government functions and services.

• Requiring you to stay home if you’re sick. In cases of COVID-19 related absences, we are not requiring employees to provide a doctor’s certificate or STO2 form to access sick pay.

• Supporting working from home. More people working from home helps support the physical distancing practices recommended by public health officials. Where it is operationally feasible, ministries are expected to encourage and support employees who want to work from home and should be flexible in considering alternative work arrangements, including requests to work from home and look after children. Any decisions to deny working from home opportunities will be made at the ADM level.

• Ensuring workplace safety. We are working with our partners and facilities leads to provide increased cleaning services, hygiene supplies and measures to promote effective physical distancing in the workplace.

• Requiring self-isolation after international travel. Any employees who travel outside Canada must self-isolate for 14 days immediately on their return to Canada in accordance with the federal emergency order under the Quarantine Act. Employees can work from home during their self-isolation where possible, or they can access sick pay.

• Cancelling or postponing events. We are cancelling or postponing any workplace events involving more than 50 people in accordance with the PHO’s order. Any smaller events that cannot be conducted using virtual options should only take place if absolutely necessary and only where required physical distancing, cleaning and hygiene measures can be applied.
Minimizing work-related travel. We are reducing work-related travel within B.C. where possible and encouraging the use of virtual meeting options as an alternative.

WHAT YOU CAN DO: BE KIND, BE CALM, BE SAFE

- Your actions matter. We must all follow the direction of the PHO: wash your hands, avoid touching your face, practice physical distancing, cough or sneeze into your sleeve, and regularly clean surfaces. We are also all obligated to provide a safe and healthy work environment, including acting respectfully and professionally in our interactions with the public and each other. It’s a stressful time, made less so if we act with kindness.
- Stay home if you are sick. Contact your supervisor and, if you are well enough, work from home if it’s possible. If you are concerned you have been exposed to COVID-19 or have symptoms (such as fever, cough, difficulty breathing), call 811.
- Trust our expert colleagues. Follow and trust the most recent advice and recommendations from B.C.’s public health experts—and encourage your friends, family and colleagues to do the same. You can find current and accurate information online at the BC Centre for Disease Control. The most current information specific to the BC Public Service is available on the MyHR website, and if you have workplace-specific questions not answered in those online resources you can contact MyHR for support.
- Take care of yourself. In addition to the preventive actions specific to reducing your exposure, make sure you’re taking good general care of yourself by eating healthy and staying well-rested.
- Take care of your community. For the vast majority of British Columbians, if you contract the virus you will experience mild symptoms. But it’s important that we all act to limit the spread of COVID-19 to protect our most vulnerable friends, neighbours and colleagues and ensure they can access the care they need. The steps all British Columbians are asked to take, while inconvenient, will help support that goal.