

# Healthy Workplace Guide for Employees

Health and Well-Being Support  
during the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency



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# Letter from Dr. William Lakey

Medical Director, Workplace Health and Safety, BC Public Service Agency

Welcome to the Healthy Workplace Guide for BC Public Service employees. This guide is intended to support you during the COVID-19 pandemic in managing your health and maintaining a safe working environment.

The collective efforts of BC Public Service employees, along with all British Columbians have dramatically changed the course of COVID-19 in our province. This has saved lives and protected many citizens. With courage and a commitment in service to others in these past months, we have coped, adapted and worked with many restrictions. With the Provincial Health Officer's (PHO) guidelines built into new workplace safety procedures, the ministries in the BC Public Service are now able to start to increase operations to support British Columbians.

I'm sure you are feeling a range of emotions as worksite staffing increases throughout the province. Some may be excited to return, some may wish to continue working from home as much as possible, and many of you will have concerns and questions. Your deputy ministers have received guidance on how to thoughtfully plan for jobs that need to be done at a worksite and when, and they will gradually introduce any necessary return to the worksite. Workplace safety plans and client interaction protocols will be posted and be in place to protect employees and clients.

By working together, following public health guidelines and safety plans, work teams can operate safely, and enjoy the benefits of increasing connections amongst colleagues:

- Ministries are updating their safety plans based on observations and changes in the COVID-19 guidance. Your ideas and concerns are important contributions.
- Your own personal hygiene practices can reduce the spread of COVID-19.
- Public Health specialists will be available to provide advice for any workplace coronavirus contact.
- Social interaction and work collaboration with colleagues while respecting physical distancing supports your individual wellbeing and mental health.
- Knowing about and accessing the available support resources can help you through this transition.
- Regular and respectful communications amongst teams through this transition builds confidence in this new way of operating our public services while keeping people safe.

Keeping up to date with any changes to the [Frequently Asked Questions on COVID-19](#) will also help.

I hope this guide is helpful. If you have questions about your workplace, please discuss with your supervisor or executive. If you have feedback on this guide, please get in touch with Workplace Health and Safety via MyHR.

The workplace safety plans, along with resources in this guide, will help you with Dr. Henry's other "prescription," which is to "be kind, be calm, and be safe."

Dr. William Lakey

Medical Director, Workplace Health and Safety, BC Public Service Agency



# Go Further Together

Each of us and the BC Public Service as a whole shares in the responsibility to minimize the impact of COVID-19 and mindfully support the slow and safe progression of BC's Restart Plan. Our collective commitment to infection management, the eight guiding principles and [our values](#), means all of us have a role to play in creating and maintaining a kind, calm and safe environment.

## What can you expect from your employer?

- Implement, monitor, communicate and progress COVID-19 exposure controls
- Develop, update and share a workplace safety plan for your work location
- Provision of supplies, facilities, and infrastructure in alignment with safe work procedures
- Orientation of staff prior to returning to the work site.
- Provision of [programs and resources to support employee health and safety](#) (i.e. [STIIP](#), EFAS, smoking cessation, stretching guide, etc.)
- Monitor [provincial public health guidance](#) and provide workplace guidance on COVID-19

## What can you expect from your supervisor?

- Regular and compassionate communication
- To share resources (i.e. [Employee & Family Assistance Services](#), [COVID-19 self-assessment tool](#))
- Flexibility and support for working from home (where operationally feasible)
- Ensure [Telework agreements](#) are in place for applicable employees
- Engage in proactive conversations with employees returning to the work site
- Provide safe work procedures before employee returns to the work site
- Model and promote self-care and healthy and safe workplace practices, especially staying home when you have symptoms of a cold, flu or COVID-19 including coughing and sneezing
- Provide clarity on changing priorities and managing workload
- Follow return to work guidance in [FAQs](#)

## What can you do?

- Be kind with self and others
- Calmly share concerns or ideas with supervisor
- Take care of your own well-being, and follow healthy and safe workplace practices
- Continue to work in accordance with the [Standards of Conduct](#)
- If you are sick or think you may have COVID-19 symptoms, get tested, stay home, and contact your supervisor. Please refer to the [BC COVID-19 Symptom Self-Assessment Tool](#) for testing information and [follow BCCDC and PHO guidance](#).

# Personal Practices

An area we can each contribute to workplace safety is our personal practices to prevent transmission. The PHO guidance that has been effective includes;

- Wash hands with soap for 20 seconds (or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer)
- Avoid touching your face
- Cover your cough or sneeze
- Maintain two meters of distance where feasible (i.e. meet virtually or by phone if possible)
- Increase cleaning and hygiene (i.e. shared spaces, no toothbrushing at work, disinfect personal work station)
- Respect occupancy limits and restrictions in the workplace (i.e. showers and fitness facilities)
- Maintain limited social connections while ensuring you do not have contact with individuals that are sick, and you are maintaining distance (i.e. no handshakes)

Adapting to these new operating realities in our homes, communities and workplaces is an additional stress for everyone. Better personal health always includes more proactive and protective practices to build your resilience, bolster your personal defenses and optimize your health to protect against community infection. Attention to personal health practices couldn't be more important than during the COVID-19 public health emergency. There are a number of [BCPSA health programs are there to assist you and your family](#).

Research on the formation of new healthy habits indicates that the following strategies make it more likely for a new habit to stick:

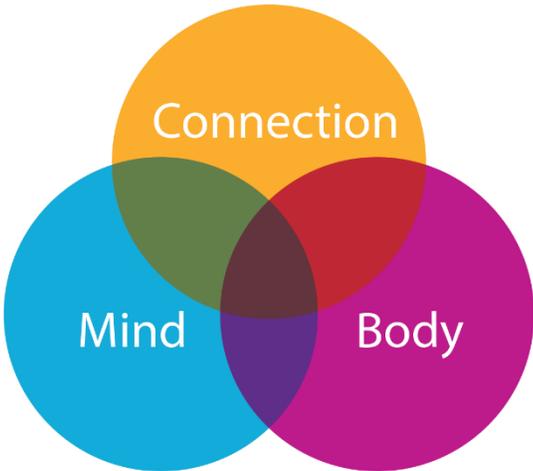
- Small, daily changes (simple and consistent)
- Substituting one behavior with the new desired behavior (i.e. put your hands in your pockets to avoid touching your face)
- Action planning (see an example of a personal plan for well-being on p. 8)
- Contextual cues or reminders (i.e. before I drink my first coffee, I will meditate for five minutes)

For those wanting to address better health protection, the rest of this guide provides a framework for attending to your health and tools to build a personal plan. Documenting your plan for behaviour changes can make you more successful in achieving your intended goals. Your planning can help you better manage through changes arising from COVID-19.

# Boost Your Well-Being

The general health practices of individuals are an important preventive measure in reducing the impact of COVID-19. Each of us has an [accountability for our own well-being](#). Given each of our unique circumstances, we will each need to take a deliberate, individualized and holistic approach to well-being. Knowing your unique approach for well-being and putting a plan into action are particularly important.

There are several holistic well-being models to help guide you. Two examples are the [eight-dimension model](#) and the [First Nations Perspective On Health and Wellness](#). Please consider developing a well-rounded plan that takes into account the common elements of these models: mind, body and connections.



<b>MIND</b> <b>Build mental resilience:</b>	<b>BODY</b> <b>Bolster your defenses:</b>	<b>CONNECTIONS</b> <b>Strengthen your coping:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Counselling</li> <li>• <a href="#">Mindfulness</a> (i.e. meditation)</li> <li>• Intellectual pursuits</li> <li>• Adventure</li> <li>• Creative activities</li> <li>• Financial planning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infection control</li> <li>• Testing and management of any new illness.</li> <li>• Ergonomics and <a href="#">stretching</a></li> <li>• Nutrition</li> <li>• Sleep</li> <li>• Physical activity</li> <li>• Manage substance use</li> <li>• Treat chronic conditions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social (at distance)</li> <li>• Community</li> <li>• Spiritual</li> <li>• Family (logical or biological)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Volunteerism and philanthropy</a></li> <li>• Natural world</li> </ul>

# Personal Plan for Well-Being

Taking care of your holistic well-being is always critical and never more so than during the COVID-19 pandemic. Change does not happen on its own. Commitment to a personal plan is an active way to be of service to yourself and others while exercising control over your healthy habits.

Effective plans are specific, clear and action-oriented (commitment, frequency and purpose). Think about whether you respond best to internal or external accountability. Your plan may include [resources provided by the BCPS](#) or [mental well-being support](#).

## Personal Plan for Well-Being Example

Commitment	Frequency	Mind	Body	Connection	Why?
Bring something to hold to all meetings	Daily		*		Practice good hygiene, avoid touching my face (replace the habit)
Two glasses of water before coffee	Daily		*		Improve hydration
Chair yoga for ten minutes	Daily	*	*		Improve mobility and regulate emotions
Attend virtual community gathering	Weekly	*		*	Revitalize connection to something bigger than myself
Nature walk with colleague	Weekly	*	*	*	Grounded and connected after time with others and in nearby nature
Clean and tidy workstation	Daily		*		Infection control routine
Budget review	Monthly	*			Awareness allows me to be proactive on financial decisions
Turn off all screens by 9 p.m.	Daily	*		*	Prepare to sleep and opportunity for undistracted connection with my partner

# Personal Plan for Well-Being Template

Commitment	Frequency	Mind	Body	Connection	Why?

## References

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<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/careers-myhr/all-employees/safety-health-well-being/health/covid-19?keyword=Coronavirus>

The Eight Dimension Model for Health and Well-being on @Work:  
<https://gww.bcpublicservice.gov.bc.ca/learning/latww/latww2019/resource/index.html>

The [First Nations Perspective on Health and Wellness](https://www.fnha.ca/wellness/wellness-and-the-first-nations-health-authority/first-nations-perspective-on-wellness), First Nations Health Authority.  
<https://www.fnha.ca/wellness/wellness-and-the-first-nations-health-authority/first-nations-perspective-on-wellness>

**For more information, please contact:**  
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**Useful Links:**

@Work: <https://gww.gov.bc.ca>

MyHR: <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/>