April 6, 2020

Dear Full Time Attendance Program Service Provider:

We hope this letter finds you, your staff and your families staying healthy in this critical time. Thank you for all the work you are doing day to day and your commitment to supporting the youth you are caring for and keeping them connected to their families and community supports. We know that you will agree on the importance of youth remaining connected in a meaningful way to their family, extended family and community—now more than ever.

We recognize that we are in an unprecedented time and that the need to be focused on physical health, while at the same time supporting connections, belonging and attachment. Due to the BC Provincial Health Officer’s recommendation on how to stop the spread of COVID-19 and the fact that a Provincial Emergency has been declared in BC, we have determined that the in-person visits with youth, and youth attending home visits, who are in Full Time Attendance Programs (FTAP) are inconsistent with this recommendation.

Youth who are in FTAP’s must continue to have access to their guardian, family and other supports. It has been through continued consultation that we are providing direction to FTAP contractors, that effective April 1, 2020, all visits, while a youth is at a FTAP, with their families will be conducted virtually (e.g. Skype, telephone), unless there is an exceptional circumstance. This direction is not made lightly, and we remain steadfast in our commitment to youth to stay connected through phone and virtual processes. We recognize the importance that these connections and communications play in the youth’s rehabilitation and transition planning for their eventual return home but at this time are taking these extraordinary measures to best protect the youth’s health and safety in light of this pandemic.

How we work with youth and their families to ensure connections and social supports is key to an individual’s rehabilitation, successful completion of the program and seamless transition back home. We will need to be creative with ways that we keep youth, families and their communities connected, much the same as we have had to do in our own families and with each other. A trauma-informed response includes; supporting multiple ways of communicating, e.g. video conference, email, phone, and encouraging opportunities and methods for phone and virtual in person contact such as Skype. Your contract manager will be working with you to ensure phone and virtual access is able to continue and the youth’s probation officer will assist in ensuring that there are no barriers to providing this connection. A positive component of this is that there can potentially be increased connections made via these new approaches.

As in any situation, there may be exceptional circumstances regarding the need for in-person visitation such as a family circumstance where an in-person is in the best interest of the youth
and can be conducted in a manner consistent with the social distancing recommendation of the Public Health Officer. On a case-by-case basis, where either a home visit, or a visit from family is in the best interests of the youth, we ask that you work collaboratively with the contract manager, youth’s probation officer and guardian in these instances, as we are all committed to ensuring the safety, physical and mental well-being of all concerned.

Thank you again for your ongoing commitment to and support for youth in your FTAP program.

As always, please connect with your contract manager at any time, for any reason if you need support for yourself, your staff, caregivers or the youth in your program.

In partnership,

Karen Blackman
A / Assistant Deputy Minister
Service Delivery Division

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