

Effective Date June 18, 2020

PURPOSE

This is a companion document to **Practice Bulletin #4, Scaling Up In-Person Connections and Facilitating Access for Children, Youth and Families**, that was revised on June 3, 2020 to support the scaling up (increase) of in-person connections between children and youth in care and their families.

BACKGROUND

During the COVID-19 pandemic in BC, the Ministry of Children and Family Development and Delegated Aboriginal Agency staff, caregivers and service providers have continued to provide services to children, youth and families.

Interim Practice Guidelines and Practice Bulletins were developed and implemented based on the BC Provincial Health Officer's guidance and recommendations. Practice Bulletin (#4) came into effect on March 26, 2020 as it was determined that in-person connections outside of caregivers' homes for children and youth in care were inconsistent with the Provincial Health Officer's guidance and recommendations at that time. On March 26, 2020, all in-person connections between children and youth and their families were suspended, with a provision for exceptions and virtual connections were established in order to maintain connections during this time.

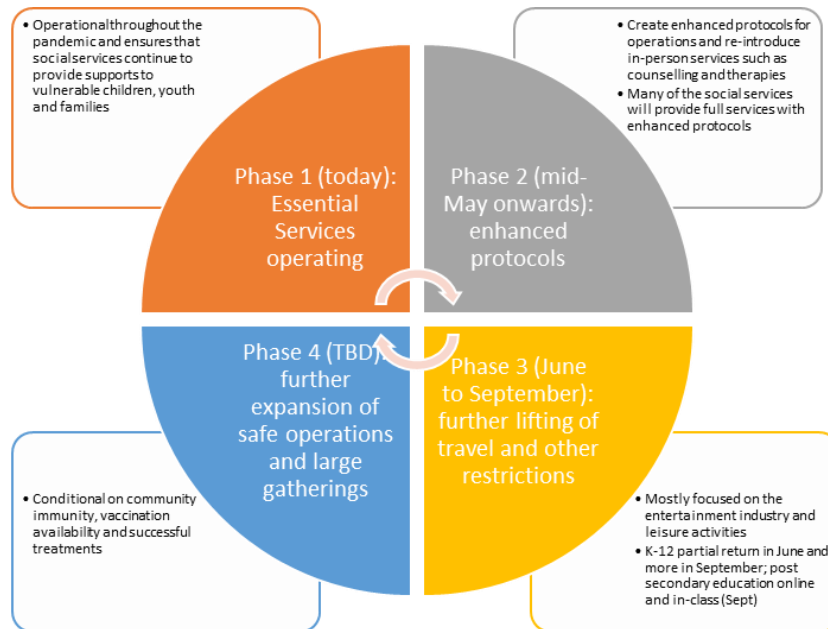
The transition to Phase 2 of the BC restart plan and the new and modified guidance from the Provincial Health Officer has made it possible to scale up in-person connections between children and youth in care and their families. On **June 3, 2020**, a revised **Practice Bulletin #4 - Scaling Up In-Person Connections and Facilitating Access for Children, Youth and their Families** came into effect.

Establishing in-person connections for children and youth in care with their families must be balanced with the health, safety and well-being of the children, youth, families, caregivers and service providers. Each child, youth, family, caregiver and community circumstance is unique, and each situation needs to be considered individually. The risk of transmission and control measures (diagrams below) need to be contemplated for each circumstance.

To prepare caregivers and front-line staff for scaling up in-person connections, two town halls occurred with the Deputy Provincial Health Officer on May 12 and 13, 2020. These information sessions provided answers to questions brought forward by foster caregivers and contracted residential service providers and information on the current state of the pandemic in BC, COVID-19 as it relates to children and youth. The Town Halls were recorded, and the link is provided at the end of this document.

OVERVIEW OF BC'S RESTART PLAN

[BC's Restart Plan](#) details the phases of recovery.



PRINCIPLES THAT GUIDE IN-PERSON CONNECTIONS

The following principles from the Provincial Health Officer (PHO) guide planning for in-person connections for children and youth in care and their families:

- Staying informed, being prepared and following public health advice.
- Staying home when sick; i.e. do not attend a visit if you have symptoms of COVID-19.
- Practising good hygiene – hand hygiene, avoid touching your face and respiratory etiquette.
- No handshaking or hugs outside of your family or those you live with.
- Wear a mask when physical distancing is not possible.
- Maintaining physical distancing outside your family or those you live with (e.g. small numbers of contacts and keeping a safe distance).
- Increasing cleaning of frequently touched surfaces at home and work.

ADULTS AND COVID-19

While COVID-19 impacts adults more than children, some adults with specific health circumstances are at an increased risk for more severe outcomes, including individuals:

- aged 65 and over,
- with compromised immune systems, or
- with underlying medical conditions.

Most adults infected with COVID-19 will have mild symptoms that do not require care outside of the home. It is important to balance the risk of COVID-19 spread against the importance of family/community connection.

CONTROL MEASURES

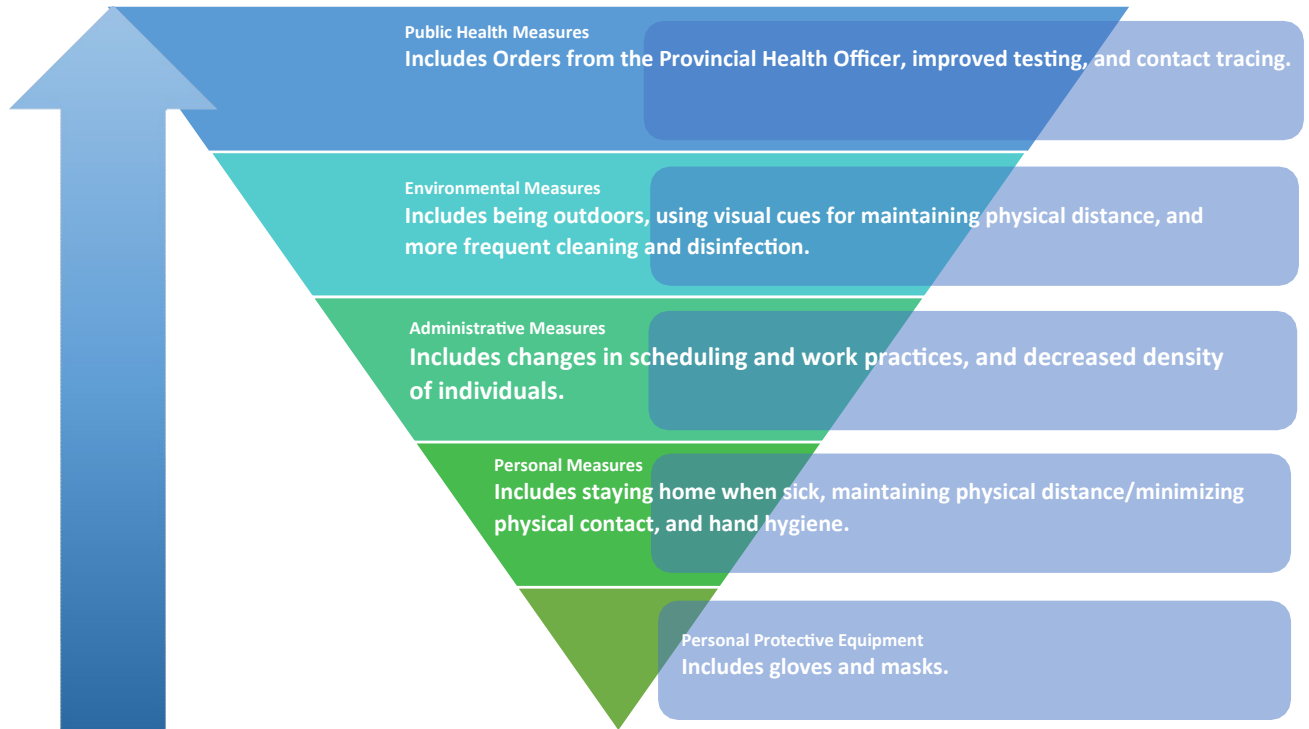
There are several measures in place to reduce the rate of transmission of COVID-19. No one set of measures is 100% effective and not all measures can be applied in all situations. We rely on the suite of measures being implemented to protect the health and well-being of our community.

These measures include:

- **Public Health Measures:** public awareness and education, restricting mass gatherings, self-isolate or quarantine, access to testing, effective contact tracing, cluster and outbreak management.
- **Environmental Measures:** outdoor spaces, good ventilation and air exchange, visual cues for maintaining physical distance, erecting physical barriers where appropriate, frequent cleaning and disinfection.
- **Administrative Measures:** health and wellness policies, decreased density in classrooms, staggered schedules, virtual learning opportunities
- **Personal Measures:** maintaining physical distance, washing your hands frequently, coughing into your elbow and staying home from work if you are sick
- **PPE:** not effective as a stand-alone preventive measure (i.e. must be used in conjunction with other measures listed above), considered after exploring all other measures, effectiveness generally limited to protecting others

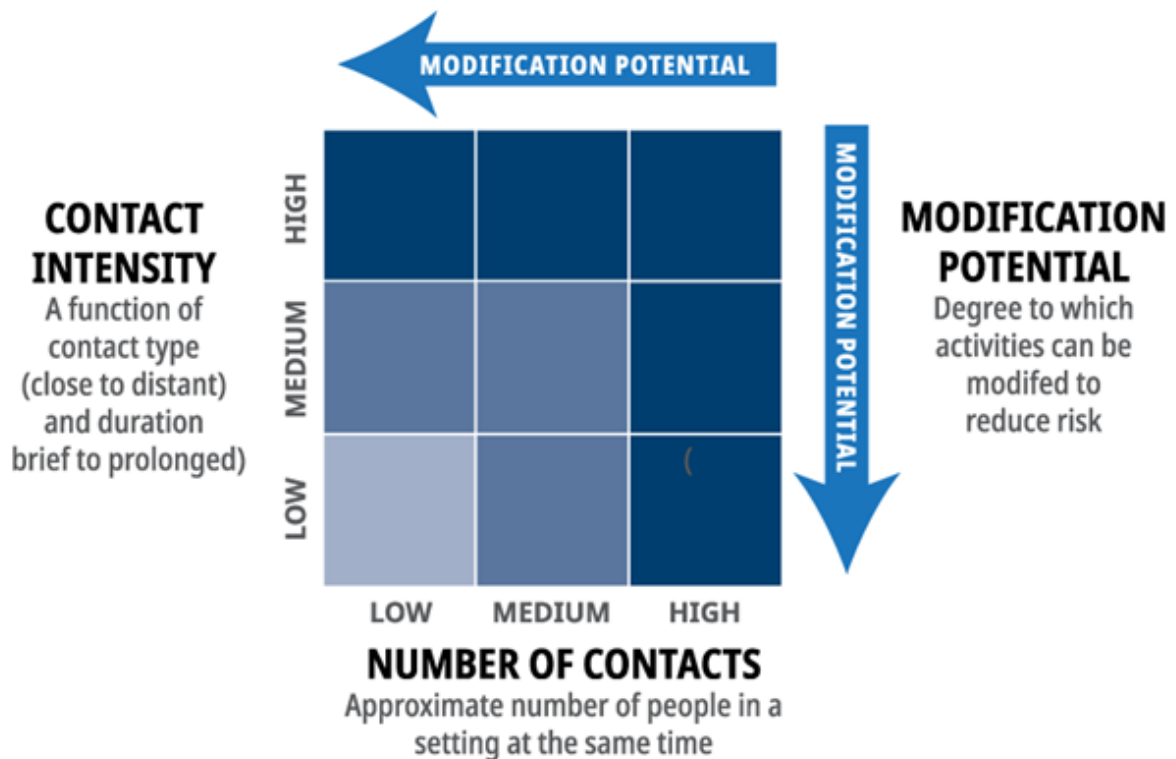
HIERARCHY OF CONTROLS FOR COVID-19

The hierarchy of controls is a framework for reducing transmission hazards. The most effective controls are at the top of the pyramid.



RISK OF TRANSMISSION

The chart below can be used to assess the risk of transmission from social interaction. It is based on two variables. First, what is the contact intensity– (how close you are to someone and for how long) and number of contacts (how many people are in the same setting at the same time). Risks can be evaluated as low, medium and high by using this approach.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

For further information on the Provincial Health Officer’s principles, guidance and recommendations see the Office of the Provincial Health Officer site, <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/current-health-topics/covid-19-novel-coronavirus>

BC’s Restart Plan, <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/covid-19-provincial-support/bc-restart-plan>