

COVID-19: UPDATE ON OUR SERVICES OPTIONS NORTHWEST

Service Update #19, Jan. 14, 2022

OPTIONS NORTHWEST continues to alter services to protect public health and safety amid COVID-19.

For COVID-19 binders and please post in a prominent place in the homes.

The health and safety of the people we support, and our employees remain our priority as we continue to monitor the COVID-19 situation and find the best and safest way to provide services.

Overview of recent orders.....

Based on assessed level of risk to the health and safety of persons served and/or employees, OPTIONS NORTHWEST reserves the right to introduce heightened pandemic precautions (beyond the guidelines provided by MCCSS, Public Health, and other government and health authorities), and/or to temporarily pause or revert to an earlier stage in provincial re-opening guidelines, and to apply either approach across one or more operating areas, or to apply in a site-specific manner.

Like all Ontarians, we are following advice from local, provincial, and national health authorities to help stop the spread of the disease. The province will be entering a modified phase II of the COVID-19 Roadmap to Reopen Ontario on January 5, 2022. In addition, OPTIONS NORTHWEST is continuing with the following to mitigate risk:

- OPTIONS NORTHWEST administrative sites continue to be **closed** to the general public. Altered services are available from each site, during our regular hours of operation from 8am to 12:00 and 1:00 to 4:00. OPTIONS NORTHWEST is continuing to operate all programs however our approach has been modified to mitigate risk. Please call 807-344-4994 for further information about programs and services available at this time. There is an automated telephone attendant when an administrative member is not at their desk. Please follow the prompts to leave a message and your call will be returned.
- All administrative and CRT employees will be accessible via phone, video conferencing and face to face interaction depending on the circumstances. Face to face interaction in other programs except congregate care, will only be for situations that are deemed best practice.
- Effective January 5, 2022, walks with family/friends (maximum 4) from the group home are allowed with a medical mask on.
- Effective January 5, 2022, Group Home backyard visits will be permitted: Visits may include up to four (4) visitors; Outdoor visitors will be screened prior to entering backyard; outdoor visitors must mask; visits will be scheduled in advanced, supervised, and not exceed 60 minutes; and other Group Home individuals will be encouraged not to enter the backyard to allow their roommate uninterrupted time with their visitors. If there were special circumstances these limits could be reviewed and approved in advance by the Pandemic Team e.g., Birthday of the individual.

- **Effective January 5, 2022, Scheduled and unsupervised visits will resume with the following procedures in place:**
 - **Active screening of a visitor upon arrival, with policies and protocols in place to admit entry to those who pass the screening. (Limited to one visitor inside).**
 - **Proper respirator etiquette and frequent hand hygiene.**
 - **Education on all required protocols will be provided by the site.**
 - **There is adequate staffing to implement visitation protocols and continue ongoing operations within the setting.**
 - **Environmental cleaning and disinfection of the visitation space(s) (including washrooms) will occur following recommended IPAC standards.**
 - **Where appropriate, the group home is able to facilitate visits in a manner aligned with physical distancing protocols, including identifying a space(s) where visiting takes place and the areas that are off-limits (e.g. common areas, etc.) and the maximum capacity limit based on ability to physically distance within a designated space.**
 - **Rapid Testing will be required prior to a visit when the tests are available.**
 - **If there is any type of illness within the home the visit will be rescheduled.**
 - **Effective Jan. 13-31, 2022 all non-essential visits to the congregate care home will be put on hold.**
- The Pandemic Team is reminding individuals who participate in the community to follow public health guidelines. Upon return to their home individuals should be actively screened.
- Please note, while attending community activities and or supporting individuals in the community, staff continue to follow regular safety protocols and adhere to the use of PPE throughout the duration of the activities. While in the community, individuals should be encouraged to wear masks and perform frequent hand hygiene throughout the activity. Employees should educate individuals on safe ways to participate in the community.
- January 5, 2022, Rapid Antigen Testing will be required twice weekly for all employees and students when supplies are available. Further information to follow.
- Vendors, Contractors and other third party supports will continue to be allowed to visit group homes and will be subject to the Rapid Antigen Testing (when tests are available). Extra thought should be given to determine if the visit is necessary or can be delayed.
- Recreational Activities (non-essential short-stay absences) for individuals outside of the Group Home, will be permitted:
 - Brief physical contact with visitors:
 - Individuals and visitors, regardless of vaccination status, are permitted to engage in brief physical contact (e.g., a hug) during outdoor visits. This includes essential and non-essential visitors.
 - Despite masking exemptions, where feasible, individuals are strongly encouraged to wear a surgical/procedure mask as well.
 - Non-essential visitors must maintain physical distance (2 metres/6 feet) before and after physical contact.
 - Rapid Antigen Testing will be completed upon return to the group home (when tests are available).
 - Recreational Activities (Short Stay Absences):
 - Individuals are permitted to leave the congregate living setting for a short stay (i.e., same day) absence in the community.
 - This will include recreational outings (activities for pleasure) in addition to essential absences (e.g., work, school, medical appointment, physical exercise). Employees will screen the individual when they return to the group

home. If someone is ill in the home all housemates should avoid going out until they are cleared by public health.

- Effective January 14, 2022, individuals from Group Homes will be permitted to attend essential overnight visits with family.
 - Upon return, the only restriction is that individuals that have been fully vaccinated must pass an active screening questionnaire that screens for signs and symptoms of any potential exposures to COVID-19. If a resident does not pass screening, the site will follow isolation policies.
 - Upon return from an overnight visit, individuals who are not fully immunized must follow additional precautions until they receive a negative result on a COVID-19 test or 14 days has passed. If the resident does not pass screening, the site will follow isolation policies.
 - **For overnight absences of 2 nights or less:** Rapid antigen screening should occur on day three and day seven from the day the resident left the setting.
 - **For overnight absences of 3 nights or more:** Rapid antigen screening should occur on the day of return (as part of active screening upon entry) and day four following their return.
 - If the resident leaves for a subsequent overnight absence within those 7 days, a new 7-day period should be started when they return to the CLS.
 - A resident who receives a positive result on a rapid antigen test should be given a medical (surgical/procedure) mask to wear, unless they are subject to a masking exemption (see masking section) and directed to a designated space away from other residents where they can self-isolate and wait for arrangements to be made for a confirmatory PCR test. (See COVID-19 Guidance for MCCSS-funded and Licensed Congregate Living Settings November 2021- Caring for Individuals Who Need to Self-Isolate).
- All employees must wear both a surgical/procedural mask AND a face shield or goggles while working within the congregate care setting or doing face to face interactions in the community. The only exceptions are:
 - During employee mealtimes when the employee is eating and strictly maintaining social distancing.
 - Face shield or goggles may be removed when not providing direct care to individuals and maintaining social distancing.
- Please ensure your PPE is stored properly in bags provided when you are eating and not left on counters, tables, or other surfaces. Audits will also be done as recommended by Public Health Unit.
- **Temperature wellness checks on individuals in group homes will be done once daily.**
- As of Jan. 5, 2022, employees working in administrative offices must always wear a face mask in public and common areas of the buildings.
- The only time a face mask is not required, is when working alone in your own office.
- Social distancing in meeting rooms/offices is required and strictly enforced.
- Sharing a space to have lunch together is not recommended at this time.
- Employees accessing the buildings after hours or on weekends are required to wear medical masks. Medical masks are available at the entrance of both buildings and are required.
- All employees/essential visitors will be screened for symptoms as they attend any OPTIONS NORTHWEST location. All essential visitors must wear a medical mask when entering a congregate setting and must wear eye protection when providing direct care. We must provide them upon entry to the home. Visitors MUST complete the screening questions or access should be denied.
- Whenever possible if a person is attending a clinical appointment, a medical mask is strongly recommended but not required.

- All non-essential travel is not recommended.
- Traveling outside of Canada: Travel restrictions - You must be cleared by ArriveCAN when returning to Canada (<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19/arrivecan.html>). If you are not cleared by ArriveCAN, you must self-isolate as per Public Health guidelines.
- Please follow the Travel Guidance provided by Public Health Unit (<https://www.tbdhu.com/travel>).
- To reduce anxiety, do not ignore your feelings, remain calm and seek assistance if you are feeling overwhelmed. The OPTIONS NORTHWEST website does include resources for employee health and well-being. In addition, you can reach the Employee Assistance Program at **1-866-331-6851**.
- Seek information from reliable news sources only.
- Reminder to use precautions as outlined by Health Canada – Wear a mask, wash your hands, cover your mouth during coughs and sneezes, stay home if you are sick. Get vaccinated. Vaccines are only one method to mitigate risk.....we still need to be vigilant with our PPE use and all of our other precautions.
- Self-care is critical as worries worsen if we are not looking out for ourselves.
- OPTIONS NORTHWEST Pandemic team meets regularly to address any new announcements, provide updates and to ensure adequate supplies/other necessities are in place.

We are doing everything possible currently to keep safe options available to support people in need of care. We will continue to monitor all the developments of COVID-19 and will continue to inform you of further changes to our services. If you have any questions or concerns, please call 807-344-4994 or email general@optionsnorthwest.com.

On behalf of the Pandemic Team, stay healthy and safe!!!

Thank You!!!!