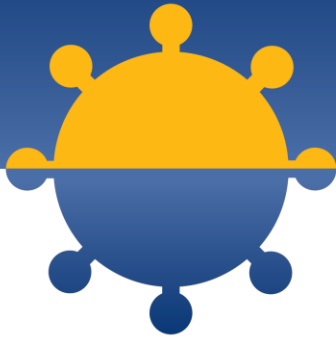


# Coronavirus COVID-19

BC Centre for Disease Control | BC Ministry of Health



## Key Facts

We are focused on slowing the spread of COVID-19 in our communities.

A sudden increase in people becoming infected with COVID-19 may impact the capacity of our health system to provide care to everyone who needs it.

By slowing the spread of the virus, our most vulnerable will be able to access care when and where they need it.

80% of people who are infected will have mild symptoms that will not require care outside of the home.

Around 1 out of 6 people who get COVID-19 may become seriously ill and develop difficulty breathing.

Older people, and those with preexisting medical conditions such as high blood pressure, heart problems or diabetes, are more likely to develop serious illness.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO TO SLOW TRANSMISSION

Take care of others by taking care of yourself.

Wash your hands, don't touch your face, and stay home if you are sick.

Monitor yourself.

If you have a fever, a new cough or difficulty breathing, call 8-1-1 for guidance.

## WHAT BUSINESSES CAN DO TO SLOW TRANSMISSION

Support hand washing, social distancing, and adopt flexible sick-leave policies to allow people who are sick to stay home.

Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces using routine practices and consider cleaning and disinfecting twice a day if possible.

## Social Sector Services – Recommendations

We would like to recognize it is a challenging time especially for those of you working at the front lines with very vulnerable populations. A number of populations face increased vulnerability during the COVID-19 pandemic including people who are homeless, street-entrenched, people living with disability and Indigenous peoples who, as a result of colonialism, may be over-represented in these populations.

Supporting the health and welfare of vulnerable populations during the pandemic requires balancing measures that need to be taken to prevent transmission of COVID-19 against the risks of withdrawing your essential services such as: housing/shelter, food security, mental health supports, personal care, overdose prevention, harm reduction.

This guidance document contains:

- Information on continuing essential social services while integrating public health principles to minimize transmission;
- Active surveillance in vulnerable populations to identify clusters/outbreaks and planning for suspected cases in social service settings; and
- Resources for social sectors during the pandemic.

March 20, 2020  
Social Sector and Emergency Operating Centre Recommendations



## **Continuing essential social services while integrating public health principles to minimize transmission of COVID-19**

The Provincial Health Officer's order of no gatherings with more than 50 people is intended to apply to one-time, entertainment, community and social events. Shelters and single room occupancy housing are exempt from this order because from a public health perspective, shelters and SROs are regarded as peoples' homes.

Overdose prevention sites and supervised consumption sites are also exempt from this order, as they are clinical spaces that provide an essential service so service delivery should continue as much as possible.

While you continue to provide essential services, you should adapt these measures wherever possible: adapt your services or space arrangements to maintain social distancing of 2 meters between individuals, encourage respiratory etiquette (cough or sneeze into elbow sleeve, dispose tissues properly) and do frequent disinfection.

## **Active surveillance in vulnerable populations to identify clusters/outbreaks and prepare for suspected cases**

Vulnerable populations are at increased risk of COVID-19 transmission and more severe illness.

We recommend you work with your health authority Emergency Operations Centres (EOCs), their municipal partners and representatives of local vulnerable populations to:

- initiate active surveillance to identify clusters/outbreaks early
- identify alternative spaces that can be used to house people who are suspected of having COVID-19 and require self-isolation
- develop plans/arrangements to manage substance use concerns in a self-isolation setting (i.e. managed alcohol, iOAT etc.)
- discuss staffing needs and possible re-deployment of staff/volunteers to ensure essential social service continuity

For example, one jurisdiction has already started their active surveillance of vulnerable populations and identified a local vacant hotel as a site that can be repurposed for self-isolation if and when necessary.

## **Resources for social sectors during the pandemic**

There are a number of resources to assist you in COVID-19 risk assessment and mitigation in social service settings.

- Vancouver Coastal Health – Facilities for vulnerable populations PowerPoint (ppt attached)
- Vancouver Coastal Health – COVID-19 resources for VCH staff and community partners working with vulnerable populations (pdf attached)
- COVID-19 prevent or slow the spread of COVID-19 within housing facilities, shelters and other community services (pdf attached)
- Vancouver Coastal Health – A public health approach to withdrawal management in a pandemic (pdf attached)

## **How to adapt your services to maintain continuity and minimize COVID-19 transmission:**

- Government of Canada - Guidance for providers of services for people experiencing homelessness (in the context of COVID-19), available online at: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/guidance-documents/homelessness.html>
- BC Housing COVID-19 factsheet for homeless service providers, available online at: <https://www.bchousing.org/COVID-19>



- Social sector organization risk assessment/mitigation tool (PDF attached)
- Vancouver Coast Health – pandemic response plan for homeless shelters, available online at: <https://sneezesdiseases.com/resource/vch-regional-pandemic-outbreak-response-plans>

**If staff or clients develop COVID-19-like symptoms in your settings:**

- Any client/staff who has respiratory symptoms should be given a mask to wear (if available) and placed in self-isolation. If a space for self-isolation is not available, measures to maintain physical distancing of at least 2 meters should be taken.
- Staff who develop respiratory symptoms at work should:
  - o put on a mask (if available), practice respiratory etiquette AND
  - o go home as soon as possible and self-isolate for 10 days.
- If individual rooms for sick clients are not available, consider using a large, well-ventilated room to cohort symptomatic patients together.
- A separation of two metres between ill clients and other clients will help reduce the spread of the virus. Privacy curtains should be drawn if available.
- The client should be restricted to his/ her self-isolation space, including during meals and any other social activity.
- Your local health authority emergency operation centre is developing a primary contact for vulnerable populations. Please contact your local emergency operation centre for more information/assistance.

