

May 12/2023



The Health and Safety Committee would like to share some exciting news!

Based on new guidance from the Ministry of Health, MCCSS and Southwestern Public Health, we are now able to lessen the restrictions that have been implemented over the last 3 years due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. WDDS is in the process of transitioning from our current COVID-19 Policies and Procedures to new IPAC Policies and Procedures. Policies and Procedures may need to be adjusted if we receive different guidance from the Ministry.

The following changes will take place **effective immediately**:

Masking:

- Masking is no longer required on a daily basis outdoors or indoors unless staff is providing personal care (i.e. showering/ bathing, using the washroom, etc.).
- **Masking will be required if someone we support develops cold or flu-like symptoms that are not normal for them. I.e. allergies, chronic cough etc. or if they test positive for COVID-19, Influenza, H1N1 etc. Staff are required to follow the IPAC measures as outlined in the Health and Safety Manual.**
- Visitors and family are no longer required to wear masking indoors or outdoors.

Vaccinations:

Staff:

- All new staff will still be required to provide proof of having completed the COVID-19 primary vaccinations series prior to being hired.
- Staff are still recommended to completed booster shots every 6 months but it is not mandatory at this point.
- Unvaccinated staff will now be eligible to apply for permanent positions. Requirements and recommendations as outlined on the posting will still be taken into consideration. I.e. attendance, disciplinaries etc.

People Supported:

- It will be the responsibility of the Case Manager and Supervisor of each location to arrange and support people with getting COVID-19 Boosters. A list of dates will be provided so next appointments can be booked. Information is required to be recorded on AIMS clinical notes and in Documentation Due when boosters are completed. This will include dates for next dose.
- COVID-19 Boosters are still recommended 6 months after the last dosage.

Rapid Antigen Testing:**Staff:**

- Vaccinated staff will no longer be required to complete weekly rapid antigen testing.
- Unvaccinated staff will be required to complete weekly rapid antigen testing every Tuesday and Friday. The results will be submitted through the WDDS COVID App. Unvaccinated staff are required to let their Supervisor know if they require more Rapid Antigen Tests and the Supervisor will arrange to get them.
- If a staff develops two or more symptoms that are not typical for them they are to complete a RAT immediately. If the RAT is negative they can come into work and wear a medical mask until symptoms are improving. If the RAT is positive they will follow the processes already in place and notify the On Call Scheduler and Manager for direction.

People Supported:

- If a person support develops two or more symptoms that are not typical for them. They should isolate immediately and staff should notify the On Call Supervisor. The On Call Supervisor will come over and complete a rapid antigen test. If the RAT is negative they will not need to isolate but should avoid close contact with others until symptoms are improving. If the RAT is positive, the person will continue to isolate until symptoms are improving for 24hrs for respiratory and 48hrs for gastrointestinal. Once this occurs the person supported no longer has to isolate. The other people in the home will only be tested if they develop symptoms and are not required to isolate unless they develop symptoms.

Visitors:

- Visitors are no longer required to test in order to enter any WDDS site but are to stay home if they are feeling unwell and have symptoms that are not normal for them.

Screening:**Staff:**

- Staff will no longer be required to complete daily active screening or temperature checks. All staff must continue to self-monitor for symptoms and report to the on call supervisor and scheduler immediately if symptoms develop.

People Supported:

- People supported will no longer be required to complete daily active screening or temperature checks.
- If symptoms develop or someone in the home tests positive on a rapid antigen test, daily screening and temperature checks are required to be completed until symptoms have fully improved. If symptoms are worsening staff are to report this to their supervisor/ on call supervisor and may need to seek medical attention.

Visitors:

- Visitors will no longer need to be actively screened at any WDDS site, however, if a visitor is symptomatic they are not able to visit and should reschedule their visit when their symptoms have improved.

Home Visits:

- There are no longer any restrictions on in home visits. People supported can now visit their friends in their homes.
- Family and friends are still encouraged to schedule visits, so not to disturb plans or others in the home.
- People should be encouraged to respect other's personal space whenever possible.

Physical Distancing:

- No longer required at any WDDS site or in vehicles but people are encouraged to respect other's personal space whenever possible.

PPE Kits and checklists:

- For locations who provide personal care, the PPE kits should be stored in each bathroom where staff would be providing personal care. If required for other bathrooms, a smaller plastic storage bin should be purchased to ensure staff have access to PPE for personal support needs.
- Locations that do not provide personal care, the PPE kit should be stored in the front hall. If a location does not have a front hall closet another location will be determined in consultation with the Supervisor.
- PPE Inventory checklists will no longer need to be completed. The monitoring of PPE supplies will be added to the Case Manager and Supervisor month end duties.
- If any staff are utilizing the PPE and notice that supplies are getting low, they should notify the Case Manager so more supplies can be picked up.

Signage and Taping:

- All signage can be removed from the Main Building, 60 Young Street and Group Homes - With the exception of the handwashing and sanitizing signs.
- Handwashing and sanitizing signs should still be hung above all bathroom, laundry and kitchen sinks.

- Tape on the floor can be removed as physical distancing is no longer required.

Enhanced Cleaning Checklist:

- No longer needs to be completed by staff daily. The enhanced cleaning checklist will need to be implemented at times when someone we support develops cold or flu-like symptoms or tests positive for COVID-19, Influenza, H1N1 etc.
- Sanitizing of high contact surfaces (i.e. door handles, light switches, kitchen areas etc) should still be completed at least once per shift or more if required i.e. after each person uses the washroom/ has a bath or shower etc.

Main Building:

- All exterior doors will still remain locked at all times.
- Staff and visitors are to use the front door only, when arriving or leaving the building.
- Options/Connections/Day Respite participants will continue to use their own entrances, as they have been currently doing.

Meeting Rooms:

- There will no longer be any restrictions on the number of people who can access a room although overcrowding is not recommended.
- Physical distancing is no longer required.
- Spaces no longer need to be sanitized prior to sitting down, however, please ensure the area is clean before leaving.
- There will be spray bottles and paper towel available in all meeting rooms when required.

Isolation Spaces:

- (i) If people supported become unwell while at Options/Connections/Day Respite at the Main Building – They are encouraged to go home on their own if possible. If they are not able to leave right away they will utilize the Health Room while awaiting transportation home. A PPE kit will be kept stocked in the Health room in order to ensure staff have what they need to provide support.
- (ii) If people supported become unwell while at Nexus/ Job Links at 60 Young Street – They should be sent home immediately. If they are not able to go home right away they should remain in room away from others. A PPE kit will be kept stocked at 60 Young St to ensure staff have what they need to provide support.
- (iii) Group Home Locations – If a person tests positive for COVID-19 on a rapid antigen test they should isolate in their bedroom. If they are unable or refuse to isolate, the location will be considered in Outbreak and protocols will be followed.

Agency Vans:

- There is no longer a restriction on the number of people able to ride in the van.

- No masking is required, but windows should be cracked open to provide adequate air flow.
- People from other locations are now able to ride in the same vehicle.

Staff's Personal Vehicles:

- Staff are encouraged to use Agency vehicles, busing or walking whenever possible.
- Use of personal vehicles are a last resort and staff need to have prior approval prior to each use by the location Supervisor.
- No masking is required, but windows should be cracked open to provide adequate air flow.
- No restriction on the number of people able to ride in the vehicle.

Everyone is still required to follow respiratory etiquette and complete regular handwashing and sanitizing when handwashing is not possible in order to prevent the spread of germs.

Although masks are no longer mandatory at all times, if people feel more comfortable continuing to wear masks they should continue to do so.

Thank you for everyone's dedication and resilience over the past three years while we navigated through such a difficult time. Your efforts and commitment are greatly appreciated.

If you have any questions please reach out to the Health and Safety Committee members or anyone on the Leadership team.