



Big Brothers
Big Sisters
OF PICTOU COUNTY

PANDEMIC PREPAREDNESS PLAN, PROCEDURES & POLICIES

April 9th 2020 - Approved



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PANDEMIC PREPAREDNESS PLAN, PROCEDURES & POLICIES

Purpose

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Pictou County (BBBSPC) strives to provide a safe and healthy workplace for all employees.

This pandemic preparedness policy outlines our overall response to a pandemic outbreak and our emergency preparedness and business continuity plan. It outlines specific steps **BBBSPC** takes to safeguard employees' health and well-being during a pandemic while ensuring **BBBSPC's** ability to maintain essential operations and continue providing essential services to our community. In addition, it provides guidance on how we intend to respond to specific operational and human resource issues in the event of a pandemic.

Pandemic Defined

According to the Public Health Agency of Canada, and other organizations that monitor public health threats, influenza or flu is caused by a variety of influenza A viruses. These viruses can cause different diseases: avian (or bird) flu, H1N1 (swine flu), pandemic influenza, and seasonal flu.

Pandemic influenza can occur when mutating flu viruses become transmissible to humans, who generally lack any natural immunity to fight off the viruses' adverse health effects. Because infected humans are so contagious, they become the primary vehicle for pandemic influenza's spread. The more humans who become contagious, the more widespread the disease becomes and the more rapid the spread is.

Generally, pandemic influenza occurs in waves, with each new group of infected people in turn infecting others. Each such wave of infection can last as long as eight weeks, resulting in steadily increasing numbers of infections, and the disease itself can take 12 months to 18 months to run its course through the population. Subsequently, the viruses sparking pandemic influenza "settle" and thereafter can cause a type of seasonal flu (also known as "human flu") that produces the symptoms and illness many of us experience during annual "flu season."

Pandemic influenza poses the most serious global threats to public health and our economy. It conceivably can cost billions of dollars in productivity losses resulting from absenteeism, and payouts of sick leave or workers' compensation; disrupt transportation and communication services on which we all depend; and impede delivery of necessary



goods and services. Inability to predict when such a disease might strike and with what severity makes it incumbent on **BBBS** to consider how our business might be affected and to articulate what needs to be done to respond to an outbreak.

Identification of Essential Personnel

BBBSPC has identified and designated certain employees whose jobs are vitally important to our continued operation in emergencies, these would include the Executive Director and Program Manager. We expect only designated essential personnel to be available for work during a pandemic unless otherwise directed. We acknowledge, however, that even essential personnel might become ill and unavailable to work or not be able to reach our worksite because of conditions beyond their own or our control. Consequently, **BBBSPC** has devised and agreed on back-up arrangements under which designated personnel in locations outside our respective areas are trained and equipped to fulfill the duties of unavailable essential employees. In addition, we have equipped our most essential personnel with all the resources (including computers, cell phones, etc.) that essential employees need to work remotely during emergencies.

Overview

In the event of a pandemic, the following are identified as the greatest concerns for **BBBSPC**:

1. Reduction or prevention of infection amongst volunteers and staff: Information on the potential for infection is critical to decrease the risk for all parties associated with **BBBSPC**. Current information and training on the pandemic, prevention, and mitigation strategies are required for dissemination to all parties. Responsibility for pandemic response should be designated within the organization and daily/weekly updates on the situation/spread are required.
2. Absenteeism: Employees may be absent due to their own illness, caring for sick family members and may have a lengthy physical and emotional recovery from the illness.
3. Disrupted services: High rates of absenteeism also affect the partners of the organization which could impact services provided by **BBBSPC**.
4. Duration: Pandemics typically occur in two or more waves, each lasting six to eight weeks. It is important to prepare for more than one episode.



Definitions

- Isolation: the complete separation from other **BBSPC** staff and partners.
- Quarantine: not going outside, not going to work, school or other public places, and not meeting with other people unless given permission by a qualified medical professional.
- Social Distancing: strategies that help to reduce the spread of pandemic influenza by minimizing human-to-human contact.
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs): special clothing or equipment worn to protect against pandemic influenza, e.g., masks, gloves, gowns, aprons.
- Antivirals: a class of medication used specifically for treating viral infections. Like antibiotics for bacteria, specific antivirals are used for specific viruses. Unlike antibiotics, however, antiviral drugs do not destroy the virus, they only inhibit their development.
- Close Contact: being in close physical proximity of others in settings such as offices.
- Flu-Like Symptoms: according to the Centers for Disease Control, symptoms are similar to the symptoms of regular human flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills, weakness, and fatigue. Some people, particularly children, have reported diarrhea and vomiting associated with certain outbreaks.
- Travel Health Advisories: issued to protect the health of Canadians by encouraging healthy travel abroad through the provision of recommendations on vaccination, preventative medication, and personal protective measures that may be taken to reduce identified health risk.
- Travel Health Warnings: issued to protect the health of Canadian travelers by providing recommendations on vaccination, preventative medication, personal protective measures, and where necessary the postponement of non-essential travel.
- Travel Restrictions: to protect the health of Canadian travelers and the Canadian public by limiting travel in order to prevent the importation of a highly pathogenic infectious disease into Canada.



Policy Isolation and Quarantine

Isolation and Quarantine during a Pandemic: **BBBSPC** will take the necessary steps to try to provide a safe work environment by minimizing risk of infection to employees, volunteers and visitors by requesting that **BBBSPC** people isolate or quarantine themselves when they have a suspected or confirmed case of the outbreak virus. **BBBSPC** will act in accordance with isolation or quarantine guidelines and directives issued by Public Health Agency of Canada, Provincial & local public health agencies, and or the advice of a physician. We reserve the right to request an individual to remove themselves from work or client sites under circumstances that may cause the spread of the virus.

Procedure

In the above circumstances, an individual is expected to work remotely from home assuming they are well enough and equipped to do so. Individuals who are asked to *isolate* or *quarantine* themselves will be paid for the isolation or quarantine period. If an individual chooses to travel to a restricted area for personal reasons, they will not be paid during the quarantine period. See Policy on Travel during a Pandemic.

Infection-Control Measures

BBBSPC takes several steps to minimize—to the extent practicable—exposure to and spread of infection in the workplace, which is an ideal site for contagion because of workers' proximity to one another. As appropriate, **BBBSPC** recommends measures that employees can take to protect themselves outside the workplace and encourages all workers to discuss their specific needs with a family physician or other appropriate health or wellness professional. (See Cleaning Procedures)

Good hygiene will assist in minimizing viruses. This includes good handwashing practices. Wash or sanitize hands often. Do NOT replace hand sanitizer with hand washing but use it to complement good hand washing techniques, particularly:

- before and after preparing or eating food
- after touching pets
- after handling waste or dirty laundry or using the bathroom
- whenever your hands look dirty
- Cough/sneeze into a tissue and then wash your hands or sanitize or cough/sneeze into your elbow



Washing your hands with soap and water is best for 20 seconds. Rubbing your hands together when you wash them removes visible dirt and germs. Disposable paper towels are best for drying your hands.

If soap and water are not available, and your hands aren't visibly dirty, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Use enough to cover the fronts and backs of both hands and between all your fingers. Rub your hands together until they feel dry.

Sanitizing stations will be available at the front and back door to the facility as well as every office will contain sanitizer.

Policy 1 – Workplace Safety

Workplace Health and Safety during a Pandemic Outbreak Period: This policy details precautionary workplace measures to promote the health and safety of **BBBSPC** employees, volunteers, and visitors by controlling and preventing the spread of an outbreak virus in our offices or spreading the infection to other sites. The main strategies include:

- Practicing good personal hygiene habits i.e. handwashing, sneezing in elbow, etc.
- Enhancing workplace cleaning procedures.
- Implementing social distancing; and
- Restricting entrance of visitors with symptoms to BBBSPC offices.

Cough or sneeze into a tissue. Throw the used tissue in the garbage and wash your hands or use an alcohol-based hand rub immediately.

If you do not have a tissue, cough, and sneeze into your elbow, not your hand. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth. If you need to touch your face, wash your hands first.

Policy 2 – Pandemic Phase 5 & Phase 6

Pandemic Influenza Phase 5 & Pandemic Influenza Phase 6: The decision to invoke the following procedures will be made when Pandemic Phase 5 or 6 has been declared by the World Health Organization and, in the judgment of **BBBSPC** leadership and the facts being provided by reliable sources, there is sufficient evidence and concern to warrant the implementation of any or all of these workplace measures.



Phase 5 is characterized by human-to-human spread of the virus into at least two countries in one WHO region. While most countries will not be affected at this stage, the declaration of Phase 5 is a strong signal that a pandemic is imminent and that the time to finalize the organization, communication, and implementation of the planned mitigation measures is short.

Phase 6, the pandemic phase, is characterized by community level outbreaks in at least one other country in a different WHO region in addition to the criteria defined in **Phase 5**. Designation of this phase will indicate that a global pandemic is under way.

Procedure

Strategy	Pandemic Phase 5	Pandemic Phase 6
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<p>Practicing Good Personal Hygiene Habits</p>	<p>All staff should practice good personal hygiene habits including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wash your hands. Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs. Use hand sanitizers spread throughout office - Sneeze into your arm or sleeve. - Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing and dispose. - Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches their eyes, nose or mouth. - Practice other good health habits. Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food. 	<p>As in Phase 5</p>
<p>Enhanced Workplace Cleaning Standards</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Workplace Sanitizing. Disinfectant products (hand and surface) and tissues will be provided for all common areas. - Signs will be posted asking staff to use disinfectant wipes to clean off surfaces they have touched before they leave common/shared areas. 	<p>As in Phase 5, and in addition:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A clean desk policy will be enforced so that desk surfaces may be properly cleaned. - Workspaces of employees that have recently become ill will be disinfected.
<p>Implementing Social Distancing</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>In-person meetings will be held only if absolutely required and should generally be avoided.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use of video conferencing, and teleconferences will be maximized. - Meeting times will be minimized. - Internal lunch areas will be closed. - Events will be evaluated to determine whether they



Strategy	Pandemic Phase 5	Pandemic Phase 6
		should proceed, or be cancelled or postponed.
Restricting Entrance of Visitors who have Pandemic Symptoms	Passive Screening <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hand sanitizers will be available at the entrance. - Post signs stating, "Please do not enter the office if you are unwell or have a fever". - Have visitors record their names, telephone numbers, date and time of visit. 	Screening <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - As in Phase 5 with oversight of staff person. - In person meetings are reduced.
Use of PPEs (Personal Protective Equipment) and Antivirals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PPEs will not be provided to employees or volunteers. - Antivirals will not be offered or administered by BBBSPC. The decision to use antivirals will be a decision between the employee or volunteer and their physician. 	As in Phase 5



Policy 3 – Workplace during a Pandemic

Workplace during a Pandemic: **BBSPC** will take the necessary steps to try to provide a safe work environment by minimizing the risk of infection in the workplace by ensuring that employees do not enter the workplace or the client site if they are ill. (see [Cleaning Procedures & Schedule](#))

Policy 4 – Ill Employees or Volunteers

Ill Employees or Volunteers: If an individual is ill or suspects they are becoming ill, that individual must stay home. If individuals come to work and appear to have symptoms, they will be asked to go home. If an individual feels well enough to work from home, they will be supported to do so; however, this is not the expectation when an individual is not well enough to work.

Employees will call-in if they are ill and leave a voice mail on the Executive Director's line or text the Executive Director

As set out by Public Health, employees will remain at home if they have the following COVID-19 unexpected symptoms. These employees will use sick time as per policy.

- fever (chills, sweats)
- cough or worsening of a previous cough
- sore throat
- headache
- shortness of breath
- muscle aches
- sneezing
- nasal congestion or runny nose
- hoarse voice
- diarrhea
- unusual fatigue
- loss of sense of smell or taste
- red, purple or blueish lesions on the feet, toes or fingers without clear cause

BBBSPC will set, and employees or volunteers shall adhere to the following procedures when employees need to be away from work as a result of a pandemic illness.

If an employee feels they need any assistance navigating a health situation, our current health plan through Manulife # 0634152 you can access a Health Navigator.

Procedures

- 4.1 In the case of absence due to pandemic illness, employees will use their existing sick leave and report their absences according to the policy.
- 4.2 During a declared pandemic year, three additional working days of unpaid leave will be added to each person's sick leave bank.
- 4.3 In the event an employee has no sick days accrued and uses the additional days given they are then eligible to request an unpaid leave of absence only after all other accrued time is used including banked time, vacation time and special leave.
- 4.4 Employees who are ill and demonstrating pandemic symptoms at work will be sent home, and their sick time will be applied to the absence.
- 4.5 Employees who are ill must notify the Executive Director as soon as possible or no later than 24 hours after determining they have the pandemic virus and not report to the workplace.
- 4.6 Employees should not return to work until they have been without a fever and they are feeling well, and two weeks have passed. As set out by N.S. Public Health.
- 4.7 In the event an employee uses all accrued time including banked time and vacation time to care for sick family members they are then eligible to request an unpaid leave of absence only after all other accrued time is used.

BBBSPC monitors emergency conditions daily to determine how long leave must continue and, following consultation with outside authorities, advises employees when to expect to return to work.

Remote Work Locations

BBBSPC acknowledges that during a pandemic, local, provincial, or federal authorities might prohibit or severely curtail individuals' access to and use of public services; close or prevent access to buildings or public highways; isolate or quarantine buildings' occupants; and prevent cross-provincial delivery of goods and services. We cannot predict and have no control over such authorities' actions and acknowledge our legal duty to comply with outside authorities' directives.

We are prepared to continue key operations from a number of remote work locations, including essential employees' home offices. We have installed at all remote work locations all the equipment necessary for off-site telecommuting operations. In addition, we will have

designated a secure website through which essential personnel can communicate with each other and outside authorities as provided by our national organization.

Policy 5 - Privacy

Privacy during a Pandemic: **BBBSPC** will comply with applicable privacy legislation and its own Privacy Policy as these relate to Health and Safety measures in crisis or emergency situations.

Policy 6 – Privacy Addendum

This Policy acts as an addendum to and supersedes elements of the **BBBSPC's** Privacy Policy. During an emergency health situation, and in accordance with directives from Public Health Agency of Canada and/or local public health agencies, **BBBSPC** may disclose necessary and relevant information regarding the health status of an individual or group of individuals without their consent or acknowledgement in order to alert individuals, clients, or visitors with whom they have been in *close contact*. In every instance, every effort will be made to advise the individual of such disclosure prior to notification being made, and information shared will be made strictly on a 'need to know basis'.

Policy 7 – Self Reporting & Monitoring

Self-Reporting and Illness Monitoring during a Pandemic: It is critical that **BBBSPC** be aware at all times during a Pandemic outbreak of the health status of any BBBSPC staff who are exhibiting *symptoms*, suspect they have the outbreak virus, or have a confirmed case of the outbreak virus. This awareness is necessary in order to manage and mitigate health risks of others, and to manage its business. All **BBBSPC** employees and volunteers are required to immediately notify their supervisor, the Executive Director, or the Board President should they exhibit symptoms which may be associated with a pandemic. (see COVID-19 symptoms above)

Procedures

- 7.1.1 Any individual with pandemic symptoms is obligated to take the following steps:
- immediately remove themselves from work.
 - Contact the provincial Healthline 811, visit an emergency room or their doctor.
 - contact their supervisor to advise them that they are ill and will not be attending work; and,
 - if they are under the care of a doctor, provide their supervisor with written clearance from their doctor prior to returning to work.

- 7.1.2 If it is determined that an individual is at risk of having the outbreak virus, or has a confirmed case of the virus, the individual's supervisor will be in regular contact with that individual or their caregivers. **BBBSPC** will monitor the health status of absent employees as it relates to pandemic symptoms only. The Executive Director will track sick leave and the reason for sickness if it relates to the pandemic virus.

Policy 8 – Business Travel

BBBSPC makes all reasonable efforts to eliminate the need for travel by taking advantage of technology that allows us to communicate or otherwise operate electronically. Generally, in the event of a pandemic, travel on **BBBSPC's** behalf is immediately suspended.

Once travel starts, until a pandemic is considered ended by Public Health officials, there will be no carpooling or sharing a vehicle.

Policy 9 – Travel Addendum

During an outbreak, this policy will act as an addendum to, and will supersede elements of existing travel policies.

Procedures

- 9.1 **BBBSPC** will issue or lift travel bans or restrictions to business travel based on *Travel Health Advisories, Travel Health Warnings, or Travel Restrictions* issued by the Public Health Agency of Canada or our Provincial government. All employees must comply with these directives.
- 9.2 Individuals are strongly discouraged from traveling for personal reasons to an area for which **BBBSPC** has issued a business travel ban or restriction.

Gatherings & Groups

A gathering is any event that brings people together in a single space at the same time. All gatherings need to follow [social distancing guidelines](#) to help limit the spread of COVID-19 and reduce the risk of getting sick. All gatherings and groups need to follow directives from Public Health.

Education & Signage

In order to keep our facility, staff, volunteers and the general public safe during a pandemic proper signage will be an important part of the strategy. During any pandemic, we will utilize a number of mediums to educate everyone including but not be limited to the following:

- radio
- print
- Website
- Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram)
- Electronic newsletter
- Facility signage

Facility signage will include but not be limited to the following:

- Front and rear door signage – outlining who can come in and what they have to do once in the facility.
- Proper arrows depicting direction
- Proper hand hygiene instructions in washrooms/kitchen and near hand sanitizing stations
- Cleaning schedule posted on staff bulletin board

More resources are available at <https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/resources/>

Personal-protection Equipment:

BBBSPC maintains on site adequate supplies of recommended personal-protection equipment, such as rubber gloves, and anti-bacterial hand gels and wipes, which **BBBSPC** may require workers to use. We urge all employees to speak with their personal physician about types and proper use of personal-protection equipment in the home.

All staff will be supplied with 2 washable masks, disposable masks will also be available if needed. Although gloves will be available, they are to be used once only then disposed as they can transmit viruses and this is not an encouraged practice. The best procedure is to wash hands regularly.

Emergency-Contact Information

Employees are required to notify their immediate supervisor of any change in emergency-contact information as soon as possible. When providing such information, employees, especially those who have children or care for elderly relatives, should identify individuals on whom they can depend if the employees themselves become sick at work and must be isolated and quarantined.

Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) Recommendations

Everyone can do their part to help us respond to this emerging public health threat. It is currently flu and respiratory disease season, and the PHAC recommends: (1) getting a flu vaccine, (2) taking everyday preventive actions to help stop the spread of germs, and (3) taking flu antivirals if prescribed.

Coronavirus (known as COVID-19)

People who, for example, recently traveled to an affected area where a pandemic has been identified, and who have symptoms associated with COVID-19, and people who have been in close contact with someone with COVID-19 or pneumonia of unknown cause are the most vulnerable populations to this virus. (Consult the most recent definition for patients under investigation [PUIs].)

- If you are a close contact of someone with COVID-19 and develop symptoms of COVID-19, call your healthcare provider and tell them about your symptoms and your exposure.
- If you are a resident in a community where person-to-person spread of COVID-19 has been detected and you develop COVID-19 symptoms, call your healthcare provider and tell them about your symptoms.
- For people who are ill with COVID-19, but are not sick enough to be hospitalized, please follow PHAC guidance on how to reduce the risk of spreading your illness to others. People who are mildly ill with COVID-19 can isolate at home during their illness.

How COVID-19 Spreads

Person-to-person spread

The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person.

- Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about six feet).
- Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes.
 - These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.

Can someone spread the virus without being sick?

People are thought to be most contagious when they are most symptomatic (the sickest). Some spread might be possible before people show symptoms; there have been reports of this occurring with this new coronavirus, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

[How easily the virus spreads](#)

How easily a virus spreads from person-to-person can vary. Some viruses are highly contagious (spread easily), like measles, while other viruses do not spread as easily. Another factor is whether the spread is sustained, spreading continually without stopping.

The virus that causes COVID-19 seems to be spreading easily and sustainably in the community (“community spread”) in some affected geographic areas.

Community spread means people have been infected with the virus in an area, including some who are not sure how or where they became infected.

Up-to-date information can be found on [PHAC’s Website](#).

PHAC Fact Sheets

[Reduce the spread of COVID-19 – Wash your hands](#)

[How to isolate at home when you have COVID-19](#)

[Vulnerable populations and COVID-19](#)

Pandemic and Mental Health

Employees may be experiencing a high degree of uncertainty, worry, anxiety and stress about the health and safety of themselves and their loved ones, and how a pandemic may disrupt their work and personal lives. It is important for all of us to acknowledge these impacts and to continue to include ways to maintain and support our mental health. It is particularly important to recognize and support those who are more directly involved in the management of the situation, and those who have been instructed to self-isolate or who are suffering from symptoms of COVID-19.

For local mental health services call 902-463-2187

For crisis call 211

For more information

<https://novascotia.ca/dhw/mental-health/>

* 9-1-1 for medical emergencies only. If you are having symptoms and looking for health care advice, call 8-1-1 (where available) or your local or provincial public health authority.

For more detail information visit (see attached COVID and Mental Health)

<https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/tbs-sct/documents/covid-19/20200316-eng.pdf>

Take care of yourself

- Eat as well as possible.
- Exercise regularly.
- Maintain normal routines and programming as much as possible.
- Spend time on hobbies.
- Get enough sleep.
- Try mindfulness, yoga, meditation, art or relaxation techniques.

Who to Contact at Your Agency

The main contact and spokesperson for **BBBSPC is the Executive Director**. Please see attached a contact list for agency staff and board of directors.