



First Nations Health Authority
Health through wellness

Employers Guide to COVID-19

FNHA COMMUNITY RESOURCE

The First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) developed this guide to assist community leaders in managing their employees during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Below are various FAQs and resources to assist communities in navigating the questions and occurrences related to COVID-19. For real time updates and public health information please go to www.fnha.ca/coronavirus. If you or your employees have any questions about your health, you are encouraged to call *811, British Columbia's COVID19 public health line.

1. HOW CAN MY TEAM AND I PREPARE TO ENSURE WE ARE READY SHOULD FURTHER RESPONSE MEASURES BE REQUIRED?

Consider these guidelines and practices to ensure your employees remain prepared and updated while COVID-19 remains a risk:

- Keep updated on COVID-19 with important messages for employers from these authoritative sources:
 - Canada's COVID-19 Economic Response Plan for businesses: <https://www.canada.ca/en/departement-finance/economic-re-sponse-plan.html#businesses>
 - FNHA information for community leaders: <https://www.fnha.ca/what-we-do/communicable-disease-control/coronavirus/community-leaders>
 - WorkSafeBC information and resources for workplaces: <https://www.worksafebc.com/en/about-us/covid-19-updates>
- Provide weekly updates to your teams and remain in close contact with any employees who may be working remotely or on leave.

- Where employees have the ability and operational requirements permit, managers should encourage employees to take laptops and phones home and work remotely.
- Continue to ensure employees do not report to worksite and communities while exhibiting cold/flu-like symptoms.
- Encourage employees to reach out to you to discuss daily work plans if they are concerned about entering workplaces and taking precautionary measures.
- Pre-emptively advise partners and stakeholders of potential disruptions to services while COVID-19 remains a risk.

2. ACROSS CANADA EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES ARE BEING ASKED TO OBSERVE PHYSICAL DISTANCE PROTOCOLS TO HELP STOP THE SPREAD OF COVID19. WHAT IS PHYSICAL DISTANCING AND WHAT CAN I DO?

Physical distancing is a way that we can slow the spread of COVID-19 by limiting close contact with others. Even though we may not be sick, we should keep two metres (six feet) from one another.

There are many ways to practice physical distancing:

- Where employees have the ability and operational requirements permit, managers should encourage employees to take laptops and phones home and work remotely.
- Consider revolving work duties and site attendance to allow for physical distancing in offices.
- Avoid social lunches and look to rotate lunch space usage to one person at a time. Clean surfaces after leaving the space.
- Do not share food, drinks, utensils, etc.
- Connect with co-workers for coffee and lunch breaks over Skype, phone etc.
- Do not use communal towels, supplies, etc.
- In an elevator, there should be a maximum of two people.

3. HOW CAN REMOTE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS OR TELEWORK BE PROVIDED FOR EMPLOYEES?

While normal day-to-day business operations remain unchanged, managers should support working remotely wherever possible.

If you do approve remote work arrangements for employees, it is recommended that you include the following messaging/process for managing these arrangements:

- Clearly define the purpose and end-date that the remote work will be revisited or discontinued.
- Ask team members to outline their planned work and deliverables for the work day at home.
- Plan phone check-ins with each employee who has been approved for remote work.

Advise employees who are currently on a flexible work arrangements that operational needs may require they adjust their work schedule.

4. IF YOU HAVE EMPLOYEES WHO HAVE ATTENDED A LARGE GATHERING AND YOU ARE CONCERNED ABOUT POSSIBLE EXPOSURE, INDIVIDUAL EMPLOYERS MAY CONSIDER:

- Asking them to self-isolate for the 14-day incubation period of the virus.

- Asking them to self-assess themselves with this online tool: <https://covid19.thrive.health/>
- Asking them to stay away from work until they are cleared by a physician if the employee has a confirmed case of COVID-19.

Human resource matters such as payment for employees who have to take leave will be up to employers and depend on factors such as union contracts, existing benefits regulations and changes to federal and provincial legislation as the pandemic evolves.

5. IF AN EMPLOYEE INFORMS ME THAT THEY HAVE BEEN IN DIRECT CONTACT (E.G., HAND-SHAKING, HUGGING, SHARING OBJECTS OR FOOD AND BEVERAGE) WITH SOMEONE WHO WAS THEN DIAGNOSED WITH COVID-19, WHAT MEASURES SHOULD I TAKE?

As above, where an employee reports flu-like symptoms, advise the employee to stay at home to recover and monitor their symptoms. For those employees who do not report cold/flu-like symptoms, explore possible remote working arrangements for a period of 14 days as a precaution.

6. IF AN EMPLOYEE HAS INFORMED ME THAT THEY HAVE COLD/FLU-LIKE SYMPTOMS (COUGHING, FEVER, RUNNY NOSE, ACHES, SORE THROAT AND FATIGUE) WHAT ACTION SHOULD I TAKE?

As you would in a normal cold/flu situation, advise the employee to stay at home to recover and monitor their symptoms. For the duration of the leave, it is advised that the employee be considered on medical leave and utilizing their sick leave benefits. Follow up with your employee as needed to clarify return to work dates and any further considerations.

All employees should be encouraged to contact their manager prior to their work day should they be exhibiting basic cold/flu-like symptoms to discuss any possible alternate working arrangements.

Advise your employees that if they develop a fever, cough or difficulty breathing within 14 days, they can call *811 or a health care professional to describe symptoms and travel history and follow their instructions carefully. For public health reasons, a phone call should precede a visit to the emergency department or doctor's office.

7. UNDER WHAT CONDITIONS WOULD I NOT ALLOW AN EMPLOYEE TO ENTER THE WORKPLACE OR REPORT FOR WORK?

We advise that employers ensure that employees are prevented from entering worksites or reporting for work in the following circumstances:

- If an employee reports that they have been diagnosed with COVID-19; or
- If an employee has recently returned from travelling from outside of Canada (including the US); or
- If an employee has been in direct contact with someone with a confirmed case of COVID-19.

Where an employee is restricted from entering worksites due to the above, it is advised that the employee may be placed on general paid or unpaid leave and asked to stay away from work for 14 days. If the employee develops symptoms during the quarantine period, they will then proceed onto medical leave.

In accordance with the Office of the Public Health Officer, all non-essential travel outside of Canada should be postponed. Employees are encouraged to discuss any travel plans with their manager ahead of time to identify any necessary precautions.

8. WHERE AN EMPLOYEE IS PREVENTED FROM ENTERING WORKSITES, SHOULD THEY BE REQUIRED TO PERFORM WORK?

In situations where employees who have been prevented from entering worksites due to returning from travel outside of Canada or are believed to have been in direct contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19, they should be expected to perform normal job duties remotely where possible as long as they do not have any flu-like symptoms.

9. WHAT IS FNHA'S ADVICE ON BUSINESS TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS AND/OR ATTENDING MEETINGS WHILE COVID-19 REMAINS A RISK?

It is advised that as a precautionary measure that non-essential business travel should be limited. Employers should be working with teams to review travel plans and put a pause on or cancel travel that is not necessary to perform core job functions over the coming weeks.

- When available, arrange virtual meetings and communicate via email, phone and Skype.

- If you need to meet in person there should be no more than five people in attendance, with all attendees maintaining physical distancing.
- When planning check-ins with your team consider alternatives to holding a meeting.

10. HOW SHOULD EMPLOYERS CONTINUE TO ENSURE OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY STANDARDS ARE MET IN THE WORKPLACE?

- Always wear gloves while cleaning and disinfecting.
- Wipe frequently touched surfaces before and after use.
- Wipe a surface clean to remove visible dirt first and then use a disinfectant.
- If you have coughed or sneezed, wipe all surfaces within a two-meter radius.
- Common household cleaners and disinfectants can effectively clean your work space when the manufacturer's instructions are followed.
- If using a cleaning or disinfecting spray avoid spraying onto surfaces directly and instead saturate a paper towel and then wipe surface.
- Wash your hands with soap and water, or use 60% or greater alcohol-based hand sanitizer after cleaning and after any exposure to areas that may not be regularly disinfected, e.g., elevators, restrooms, doorknobs, photocopiers, kitchens etc.

11. WHAT IS THE FNHA'S ADVICE WITH RESPECT TO LAYOFFS ?

We encourage you to remain in communication with the FNHA on any significant decisions you may be considering in relation to your existing funding arrangements.

The FNHA has been receiving questions from employers with respect to their decision about whether to lay off staff members. This question has arisen due to the voluntary or mandatory shutdown of program operations.

The FNHA does not expect you to take these measures but understands this is a decision that has been and will continue to be made by employers, as part of their response in addressing this evolving situation.

Generally, a layoff is a period of time where an employee ceases to work and the employer stops compensation. If you are considering layoffs please be aware that they may be considered a termination of the employment relationship and, if applicable, notice or pay in lieu of notice may be required.

When considering layoffs please assess the following:

- Existing employment contract obligations, individual or collective agreement(s);
- Work that can continue to be performed and whether or not it can be performed remotely in accordance with the principles outlined in #3 above;
- Whether the employee can perform other work in support of program implementation, once the program can be implemented;
- Whether the employee can be re-deployed on other tasks, either in their unit or another unit;
- The temporary re-deployment of the employee to a different priority area;
- The temporary reduction of hours to better reflect the reduced level of operations; and
- The use of vacation or other forms of leave to manage this temporary situation.

Under provincial legislation in BC an employer may only temporarily lay off an employee in the following circumstances; if allowed pursuant to the employment agreement, with the consent of the employee or it is an accepted industry practice. Typically, layoffs can only be up to 13 weeks in a period of 20 weeks or that period of time where an employee has the right to be recalled under a collective agreement.

As these are unprecedented times, BC has amended this legislation in order to allow an employee to take unpaid, job-protected leave related to COVID-19 in the following situations:

- They have been diagnosed with COVID-19 and are following the instructions of their medical provider;

- They are in quarantine or self-isolation and acting in accordance with the orders from the Provincial Health Officer, Quarantine Act (Canada), guidelines from the BC Centre for Disease Control or guidelines from the Public Health Agency of Canada;
- Their employer has directed them not to work due to concern about their exposure to others;
- They need to provide care to a minor or dependent adult; and
- They are outside of BC and unable to return to work.

Under the Canada Labour Code a layoff is defined as a period of three months or less. If the period is longer than three months, then one of the following conditions must be present:

- The employer notifies employees before the layoff of a date for recall no longer than six months;
- The employer continues to compensate the employees an agreed upon amount;
- The employer continues to pay pension benefits to their plan;
- The employee receives or is qualified to receive supplementary unemployment benefits; or
- The layoff has occurred in accordance with the relevant collective agreement.

The federal government has announced a COVID-19 Economic Response Plan, including details about the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy. This package is designed to help businesses, including societies, keep and return workers to their payroll.

**For updates and public health information go to www.fnha.ca/coronavirus
If you have any questions about your health, call *811**