

## GUIDANCE FOR INTERACTION WITH VULNERABLE POPULATIONS IN COMMUNITY SETTINGS

### **OBJECTIVES**

- Contain COVID-19.
- Protect staff.
- Identify individuals requiring isolation.
- Maintain essential services.
- Reduce demand on emergency and acute care.

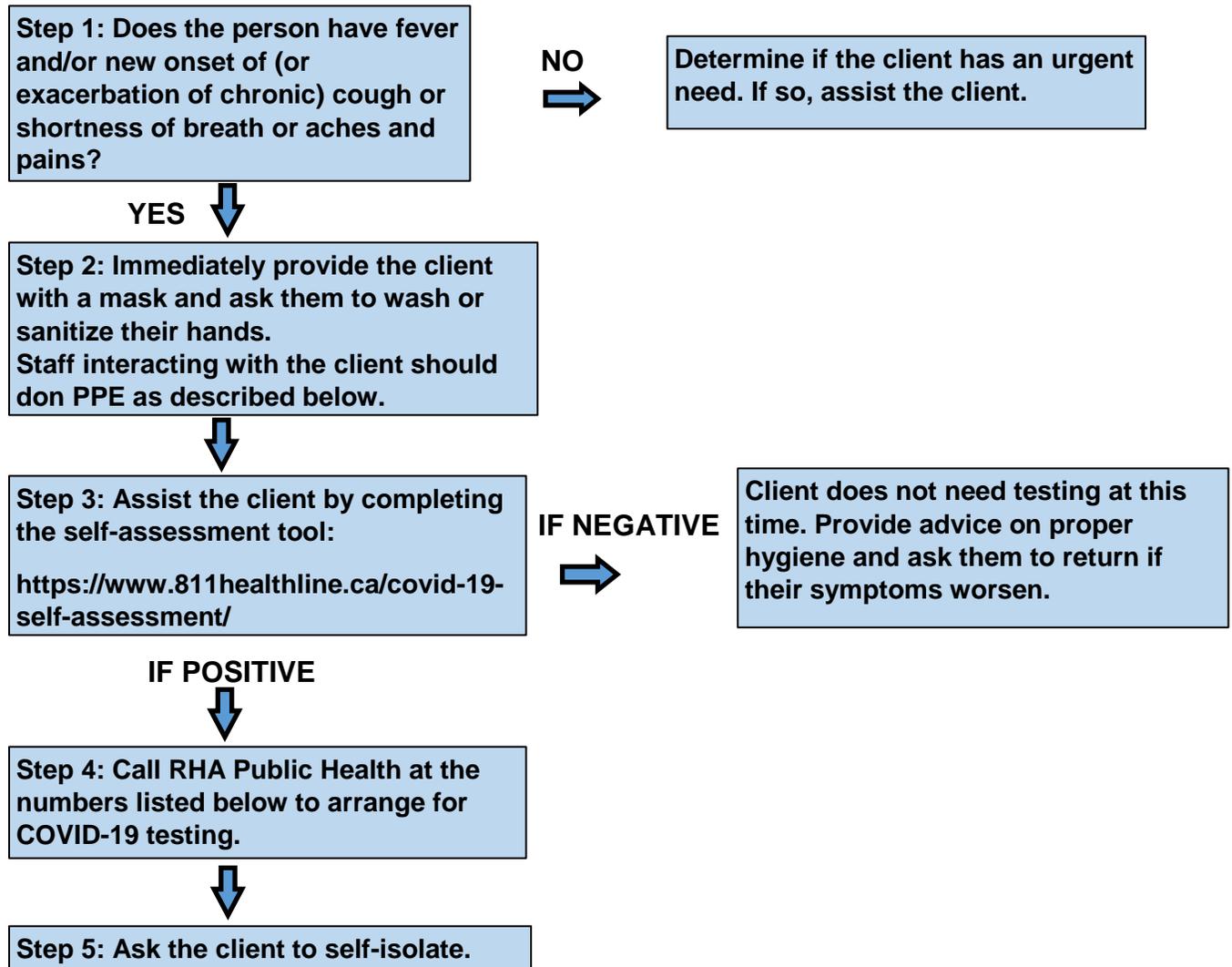
### **ROUTINE HEALTH CARE**

- Stop all non-urgent care and activity within the space.
- Continue essential services, shifting as much as possible to telephone or video-enabled care. Examples of essential services include, but not limited to:
  - Mental health services;
  - Medication refills;
  - Opioid Dependence Treatment (<https://www.gov.nl.ca/covid-19/files/Supporting-People-Requiring-Opioid-Dependence-Treatment.pdf>); and
  - Meal service by take-out.
- Where appropriate, try to limit to one person at a time in small spaces. Maintain appropriate social distancing (two arm's lengths distance from others), if possible.
- Unless urgent/emergent, do not order tests. This includes diagnostic imaging, bloodwork, and urine testing.
- Minimize referrals to specialists, unless necessary.
- Clients should only visit emergency rooms if absolutely necessary.
- Encourage all clients to wash their hands when they arrive. If they cannot wash their hands with soap and water, a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol can be used. Provide clients with education on hand hygiene, social distancing, and safe use. Visit <https://www.gov.nl.ca/covid-19/> for further details and tools.

### **CLIENTS WITH POTENTIAL COVID-19**

- If possible, dedicate a separate entrance and isolated space for individuals who present with possible COVID-19 symptoms and require screening.
- Use the flow chart, "Screening Clients for Potential COVID-19" on the following page to determine the next steps.

## SCREENING CLIENTS FOR POTENTIAL COVID-19



If a client screens positive for symptoms and needs to be tested:

Call Public Health within your regional health authority, daily from 8:30am – 4:30pm:

Eastern Health: 1-709-752-3918

Central Health: 1-800-563-3690

Western Health: 1-709-649-5905

Labrador Grenfell Health: 1-709-899-6700

If after hours, please leave a voice message and a public health official will return the call during business hours.

We are in the process of identifying options for the transportation of clients (who are unable to transport themselves) to the testing site and, if necessary, to a self-isolation location. When options are confirmed, updated information will be available on <https://www.gov.nl.ca/covid-19>

#### While waiting/after positive test

- If the patient can self-isolate at home, provide the client with the attached self-isolation information.

We are in the process of identifying options for individuals who need to self-isolate but do not have a place to do so, either due to homelessness or living in crowded living arrangements. When options are confirmed, updated information will be available at <https://www.gov.nl.ca/covid-19>

- Individuals with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 should not seek treatment at an emergency department or from their primary care provider, unless symptoms are severe.

#### **PROTECTION OF STAFF**

- If staff are interacting with clients who have, or are suspected of having, COVID-19 (for example, if a client walks in to a facility with COVID-19 symptoms and asks for assistance), they should wear recommended Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). See below or refer to <https://www.gov.nl.ca/covid-19> for information on putting on and taking off PPE.
- Eliminate or reduce exposure for staff who are in high-risk category: individuals over 60 and those with chronic health conditions/immunocompromised. It will be an operational decision whether the individual can be re-deployed to an area where exposure can be minimized or will need to stay home.

#### **CLEANING**

- In addition to routine cleaning, surfaces that have frequent contact with hands should be cleaned and disinfected twice per day and when visibly dirty. Examples include doorknobs, elevator buttons, light switches, toilet handles, counters, hand rails, touch screen surfaces and keypads.
- For clinics, clean blood pressure cuffs, thermometers, and pulse oximetry units after client visits, and workstations after morning and afternoon clinics.
- For more information see, "Cleaning and Disinfection for Public Settings"  
<https://www.gov.nl.ca/covid-19/files/factsheet-covid-19-environmental-cleaning-NL.pdf>

#### **PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)**

The purpose of PPE is to interrupt the transmission of infection. Donning (putting on) and doffing (taking off) of PPE should be reviewed. You are at greatest risk to contaminate yourself when removing PPE. If interacting with a person suspected of having COVID-19:

- Immediately provide the person with a surgical mask.
- Don the appropriate PPE
  1. Gown
  2. Gloves
  3. Surgical mask with eye protection.
- Removing Protective equipment:
  1. Remove gloves - Clean hands with alcohol based hand rub, unless visibly soiled

2. Remove gown – Clean Hands with alcohol based hand rub, unless visibly soiled
3. Remove eye protection
4. Remove mask
5. Clean your hands with alcohol based hand rub, unless visibly soiled
6. If hand are visibly soiled, handwashing with soap and water must be performed.

#### N95 Respirators

- N95 respirators required for aerosol-generating procedures only and are not required for general care
- N95 respirators require the wearer to be fit - tested.

### **HOW TO HELP CLIENTS PROTECT THEMSELVES**

Everyone has a role to play in reducing the spread of disease, including COVID-19. Actions that can be taken to stay healthy include:

#### Hygiene

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer in the absence of soap and water.
- Avoid contact with people who are sick.
- Practice proper cough and sneeze etiquette. Cover your mouth and nose with your arm when coughing and sneezing and immediately dispose of used tissues in the trash.
- Stay at home if you are sick.
- Frequently clean and disinfect high-touch areas such as toilets, bedside tables, door handles, and light switches with diluted bleach or a regular household cleaner.

#### Social Distancing

Together, we can slow the spread of COVID-19 by making a conscious effort to keep a physical distance between each other. Social distancing is proven to be one of the most effective ways to reduce the spread of illness during an outbreak. This means changing routines to minimize close contact with others, including:

- avoiding non-essential gatherings
- avoiding common greetings, such as handshakes and hugs
- limiting contact with people at higher risk like older adults and those in poor health
- keeping a distance of at least 2 arm's lengths (2 meters) from others, as much as possible

### **Glossary of Resources**

1. Opioid Dependence Treatment Information Sheet: <https://www.gov.nl.ca/covid-19/files/Supporting-People-Requiring-Opioid-Dependence-Treatment.pdf>
2. Supporting Vulnerable Populations Information Sheet: <https://www.gov.nl.ca/covid-19/files/Supporting-Vulnerable-Populations.pdf>
3. How to Self-Isolate: <https://www.health.gov.nl.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/coronavirus/healthcareprofessionals/factsheet-covid-19-how-to-self-isolate.pdf>
4. Self-isolation: Guide for caregivers, household members and close contacts: <https://www.health.gov.nl.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/coronavirus/healthcareprofessionals/factsheet-covid-19-guide-isolation-caregivers.pdf>
5. Cleaning and Disinfection for Public Settings: <https://www.gov.nl.ca/covid-19/files/factsheet-covid-19-environmental-cleaning-NL.pdf>
6. Hand Washing Poster: <https://www.gov.nl.ca/covid-19/files/Covid19-Hand-Washing-Poster.pdf>