

Community Support During COVID-19

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have long been known to support one another through difficult times. Now, more than ever, we need all communities across the province to coordinate efforts to support residents, particularly those most vulnerable, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

What is needed?

- Supporting vulnerable people in:
 - Accessing essential items, such as food, household supplies and medications.
 - Accessing information on services available to them such as medical care, food banks, etc.
 - Reducing social isolation and supporting positive mental health and wellbeing.

Who are vulnerable people in our society?

Vulnerable people are most at risk of severe complications from COVID-19 as well as negative impacts as a result of isolation.

- Older adults
- People with chronic health conditions such as a compromised immune system
- People with mental illness and substance use problems
- People facing social or financial barriers
- People who have difficulty communicating or accessing transportation
- People who are homeless or isolated
- Some newcomers to our province
- Non-native English speakers

How You Can Help

Remember, you don't always have to know the answers. But knowing the problem is a good start!

- Consider how your town/community can leverage its existing resources to support others.
- Create a registry of needs and develop a plan for how your town can respond to those needs.
- Coordinate with other groups (community agencies, fire department, church groups, etc.) to provide support.
- Establish a central phone number and/or email where people can call if they need help.
- Consider translating some of your key documents in languages commonly spoken by newcomers in your community.

Consider...

- Can town council staff contact all residents and inquire if they are in need of essentials?
- Is there a list of volunteers who can run essential errands or check on neighbors by telephone?
- Are there local youth groups such as Scouts Canada, Girl Guides of Canada, Canadian Cadet Organizations, Service Clubs, or Faith Based Groups, etc. who could write letters to community members, such as seniors, who may be alone and isolated?
- Reaching out to residents who may have a limited social network – social isolation can be particularly present among new residents and their families, persons with disabilities, seniors, and single parent families.

- Explore new ways of mobilizing community members to reach out to one another, while maintaining physical distance.
- Using social media to promote acts of kindness and hope like music, painting in windows, etc.
- Striking a balance in allowing access to outdoor spaces to support mental health and wellbeing, while allowing for physical distancing.

Resources

There are provincial resources available to help you in supporting your neighbours.

- For the latest information on COVID-19 in Newfoundland and Labrador, please go to the following webpage: www.gov.nl.ca/covid-19.
- For those without access to the internet, encourage people to listen to the local news on television or radio for important community updates. Consider how your community can share information like mailouts, community signs or postings in local papers and stores. Encourage people to get news from trusted and valid sources.

Mental Health and Addictions

- People may feel overwhelmed and stressed during this time. It is important to remind people that that this is normal and will pass. Promote the following mental health supports:
 - If internet is available, encourage people to visit www.bridgethegap.ca for many free, local mental health and addictions resources and programs available to people of all ages.
 - For those that may feel isolated and alone, they may speak with a trained mental health peer supporter on the phone at the Provincial CHANNAL Warm Line at 1-855-753-2560 from 9am to 12am daily (Newfoundland time).
 - If a person is unable to cope, the Mental Health Crisis Line is a free, confidential service for individuals, family and friends. The crisis line is province-wide, 24 hours a day and be reached at 709-737-4668 or 1-888-737-4668. The Kids Help Phone is also available at 1-800-668-6868.
 - It is expected that some people will use substances, such as alcohol, cannabis, opioids, and street drugs, more than they would typically use. The change in routines for work or school, increased fears and anxieties, physical distancing, and self-isolation requirements for people during COVID-19 pandemic may lead to increased use. If you know someone is struggling with substance use at this time, help is available through the Provincial Mental Health and Addictions Systems Navigator at 1-877-999-7589, Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
 - For people who are concerned about their use of opioids or someone's else use, they can call a temporary provincial phone line that is now available Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and can be reached by calling toll-free at 1-844-752-3588. The Provincial Opioid Dependence Treatment line will help individuals navigate the system and connect with opioid addiction support and services.

Assistance with self-isolation by public health order

- For anyone having issues or concerns regarding self-isolation, please call the Canadian Red Cross COVID-19 help line at 1-800-863-6582, available 8:00am to 8:00pm daily.

If a person shows signs of COVID-19.

- If a person is showing symptoms of COVID-19 (two or more of: fever or signs of fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose, or headache) they should not visit their family physician's office or local health clinic, and unless it is a medical emergency, they should not go to the Emergency Department. They should stay at home and call 811.
- Individuals should use the self-assessment tool on the HealthLine 811 website to determine if they need to call 811: www.811healthline.ca
- If individuals are not able to access the self-assessment tool, they are advised to call 811.

Access to Food

- People may have increased struggles around access to food in these challenging times. The Government of NL, along with the Federal Government, are providing funds to support community food programs in our province to maintain their services safely during the COVID-19 pandemic. If individuals or groups in your community have questions related to food access:
 - Call 811 to be directed to local supports for food security, including access to food delivery, food banks and meals programs.
 - Visit www.foodfirstnl.ca/covid19 for a listing of food programs and resources by community.
 - See www.gov.nl.ca/covid-19/resources-2/ for information on safely distributing food during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Contact Us

- We are here to help you in any way we can.
- If you have questions, email COVID19@gov.nl.ca for non-health related inquiries, or healthinfo@gov.nl.ca for health-related inquiries.