

COVID-19 RESPONSE UPDATE

TO: All PACE Staff & Clients
FROM: Laura Visser, Chief Executive Officer
DATE: Friday, April 17, 2020
SUBJECT: COVID-19 Response Update

Yesterday, the Ontario Government released the details of the new emergency order and regulations that apply to the long-term care provider organizations and their employees. This order will also affect many attendant service and community support service organizations, including PACE. I am writing today to share details of the emergency order, the potential impacts for PACE, and the steps PACE is taking to mitigate risks and impacts for clients and staff.

Provincial Emergency Orders Limiting Work to a Single Long-Term Care Home

The new emergency order issued yesterday requires the following actions:

- As soon as reasonably possible, and no later than 12:01 a.m. on Wednesday, April 22, 2020 an employee of a long-term care provider shall not also perform work:
 - in another long-term care home operated by the long-term care provider
 - as an employee of a retirement home
 - as an employee of any other health service provider
- By Friday, April 17, 2020 any person who works as an employee of a long-term care provider and is also an employee of another health service provider must inform each of their employers that this emergency order applies to them. These individuals will need to choose which of their employers they will continue working for while the emergency order is in effect. They will be given an unpaid leave of absence from the employer that they do not work for during this period of time.

This order is specific to long-term care providers and workers. This order does not legally empower other health service providers to require employees to work for only one organization.

This emergency order will be in place for 14 days (until May 6, 2020), unless it is extended beyond that date by the provincial government.

Anticipated Impact for PACE

At present, we are aware of up to 20 team members who also work for long-term care provider organizations. The PACE Human Resources team has reached out to each of these impacted team members yesterday to ensure that they are aware of the requirements of the emergency order.

While we hope that many of these individuals will choose to continue to work for PACE during this emergency order, we appreciate that there are many factors that will contribute to each team members' decision. The PACE Human Resources team is supporting the affected team members to make a decision about which employer they will choose to work for while the emergency order is in effect and – if they choose their long-term care employer – to confirm when their final shift will be between now and next Tuesday night (April 21, 2020).

While it is inevitable that PACE will be affected by this emergency order, we will not have a concrete understanding of impact on staffing levels until the end of day today (Friday, April 17th) when we have received the decisions from all affected staff.

It is important to note that, although the emergency order only applies to long-term care providers and their workers, some other health service providers are also asking their staff to pick a single employer. The PACE Human Resource team will also work with and support staff who receive this request from another employer.

Efforts to Mitigate the Impact for PACE Clients & Team Members

PACE is committed to continuing to proactively prepare for and effectively respond to the evolving circumstances associated with COVID-19. Action to help mitigate the impact of the latest emergency order on PACE clients and team members includes the following:

- PACE has assessed the potential ‘worst-case-scenario’ impact on staffing levels for each PACE Supportive Housing program location and for the Attendant Outreach program based on the team members we currently know are also employed by a long-term care provider organization. This analysis will be refined as we receive the confirmed decisions from team members affected by the emergency order.
- PACE will do our best to address any resulting scheduling impacts by:
 - Maximizing opportunities to adjust the hours of other PACE team members that work at the affected PACE program locations.
 - PACE has established a Memorandum of Understanding with each of the unions representing PACE staff to establish a PACE Relief Pool during the COVID-19 pandemic. This temporary agreement will help PACE to continue to serve clients with PACE staff and to provide PACE staff with extra hours if they wish. We will maximize the opportunity for PACE team members who have signed up to participate in the PACE relief pool to pick up shifts/bookings with other PACE program locations.

Team members who are interested in participating in the relief pool are encouraged to:

- Review the details emailed to all staff on April 8th and posted by program management today.
 - Contact Kimberly at ext. 228 or kgooder@pace-il.ca or Paresh at ext.238 or plimbachia@pace-il.ca by today - Friday, April 17 - at noon.
- Continuing to work with a primary third party agency for PACE and striving to have consistent agency staff, when required, at each program location.

It is important to acknowledge that, despite these efforts, staffing levels at PACE may become critically affected. If that happens, PACE will be required to transition to essential service delivery only. To prepare for this possibility, the Directors of Client Services are actively working with Program Management to review each client’s service needs and the nature of each client booking to enable nimble decision-making and response if/when needed. Clients will be contacted in advance of any adjustments to service delivery being implemented.

Mitigating the risk of PACE staff working at more than on PACE program

To help mitigate the risk of PACE staff working at more than one program:

- In addition to the screening of each PACE team member and all agency staff before each shift, the following enhancements will be implemented as soon as possible and no later than Monday, April 20th:
 - a) all staff will be required to complete a second screening process at the end of each shift. Staff will receive additional direction from program management about this enhanced practice.
 - b) An updated staff and client screener, that includes secondary/atypical symptoms of COVID-19, will be introduced.
- PACE proactively implemented universal masking at the beginning of April and is in the process of distributing eye protection (goggles) to each PACE team member for the duration of all shifts/bookings. Wearing these two pieces of personal protective equipment serves two purposes: they prevent the team member wearing the equipment from touching their face and they protect their co-workers and the clients from the possibility of unintentional asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic exposure.
- If PACE experiences an outbreak at a supportive housing location, the staff working at that affected program will not be allowed to work at any other PACE program location until the outbreak is declared to be over. Staff that support clients who are identified as having a probable or confirmed case of COVID-19 will full personal protective equipment (mask, goggles, gown and gloves) for all bookings with the client and will follow proper protocol for putting on, taking off and disposing this equipment.
- PACE will also continue to actively ensure that it is possible for staff to practice appropriate physical distancing in the program office, enhanced hand hygiene (washing hands each time they enter the program office) and high-touch surface cleaning in each program office and shared work equipment (e.g. cell phones).
- We will continue to actively monitoring and do our best to anticipate and proactively implement changes in recommended infection prevention and control practices.

Mitigating the risk of PACE / agency staff working for other (Non- LTC) Employers

Recognizing that it is not currently legally possible for PACE to request staff to only work for one employer, we are taking the following precautions:

- We will be reaching out to employees that have disclosed that they are working for another employer to confirm whether their work with the other employer involves:
 - Working with individuals with suspected, probable or confirmed COVID-19;
 - Providing care in a ‘congregate’ setting;
 - The provision of personal protective equipment to wear while at work; and
 - Other questions that will allow an assessment of exposure risk.

We will also reiterate the importance of letting PACE know, immediately, if they believe they have had any unprotected exposure to an individual with COVID-19 as a result of their work with another employer.

- Clients working on a unit/program location that has been declared by their other employer to be experiencing an outbreak of COVID-19, will not be allowed to work for PACE until the outbreak has been declared to be over/clear.
- PACE will also be working with our primary third party agencies to ensure that the agency staff sent to support PACE programs:
 - Are not also employed by any long-term care provider organizations
 - Are not also being sent by the agency to work for any long-term care provider organizations

Disclosure Commitment

At present, PACE continues to have no client or staff with probable/confirmed COVID-19.

If this status changes, PACE is committed to disclosing this information in a manner that a) respects the privacy of the client/staff that has been identified as having a probable or confirmed case of COVID-19, and b) is appropriate based on relative risk of potential exposure for other clients and/or staff.

The attached communication plan outlines PACE's commitment related to disclosing potential exposure to COVID-19. If you have any questions about this communication plan, please contact Judy Ilcio at JIlcio@pace-il.ca.

Government Advocacy

In closing, I want to also let you know that PACE is working with our attendant service, independent living and community support service partners on joint government advocacy related to COVID-19. This includes advocacy related to:

- the need to appropriately recognize the needs of individuals living with disabilities in COVID-19 planning and decision-making;
- the need for timely and equitably prioritized access to personal protective equipment and mobile COVID-19 testing; and
- the inequities being created by the inconsistent and siloed decisions being made by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (which funds organizations that support adults with developmental disabilities), the Ministry of Long-Term Care (which funds long-term care homes) and the Ministry of Health (which funds home and community care organizations, including attendant service providers).

As always, if you have any comments, questions or concerns about any of the contents in this update, please speak to your program management or reach out to a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

On behalf of the Senior Leadership Team, I thank you again for your contributions and efforts towards ensuring that we collectively respond to the COVID-19 pandemic in a manner that best minimizes the risks and impacts for all clients and staff. I know it has not been easy for anyone and acknowledge that the fact that we continue to have no client or staff cases of probable/confirmed COVID-19 is due to the efforts of each and every client and PACE team member.
