

BRITISH COLUMBIA REGIONAL OFFICE

6222 Willingdon Avenue, Burnaby, BC V5H 0G3

Tel.: (604) 291-1940 Fax: (604) 291-1194 / cupe.ca / scfp.ca

COMMUNITY SOCIAL SERVICES COORDINATOR UPDATE FOR March 23, 2020

To all CUPE Locals and Staff in the Social Services Sector,

Thank you and your members for the meaningful work you do every day—especially right now. Like all British Columbians we appreciate the important and at times critical work of our Social Services members, and no more so than during an extraordinary crisis such as the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. We are all under significant stress as we cope with constantly shifting circumstances for our families and communities during the crisis, and health care workers are under the greatest stress of all. You are the line of defense between COVID-19 and the general public. If there is anything, we can do to support you, please let us know.

While most of the information contained in these updates can be passed on to frontline members, the intent of the document as a whole is for staff and local leadership ONLY. Please use common sense in selecting what parts you pass along to your membership. For example, information about Staff is regarded as confidential and for Local leadership only.

B.C.'s health care system continues to be on heightened alert to contain and slow the spread of COVID-19. As the situation evolves, the Ministry of Health, Office of the Provincial Health Officer, and [BC Centre for Disease Control](#) are providing new information on a daily basis.

To assist you further during this difficult period, we want to provide the most accurate and up to date information relevant to your work in health care. Please visit [CUPE BC's website](#) for general information on responses to COVID-19 for CUPE members, as well as frequently asked questions. CUPE National has also responded with these [general occupational guidelines](#) on COVID-19.

Self Care

Like our members, Local officers and Stewards are in unprecedented times. Please remember that you too need to practice some self care. It's natural to feel some fear and anxiety around things that are unknown, but it's our individual responses to those feelings that can be most detrimental to our mental health. Many EAP/EFAP services are able to offer telephone support. Whether or not your Employer(s) have a program

MARK HANCOCK

National President/Président national

CHARLES FLEURY

National Secretary-Treasurer/Secrétaire-trésorier national

DENIS BOLDOC, PAUL FAORO, FRED HAHN, JUDY HENLEY, SHERRY HILLIER

General Vice-Presidents/Vice-présidences générales

and what is offered will vary with each Employer, but please make sure that you are aware of what tools you may have and use them as needed for yourself as well as your members.

Member Rights

Members should be aware of their workplace rights during these extraordinary circumstances; some of which we have negotiated in response to this public health emergency:

- Paid general leave on isolation/quarantine, without impacting on your leave banks, including sick leave;
- A safe workplace, including the provision of personal protective equipment, procedures and training (where necessary) to protect you while you are working to keep the public safe; and
- Refusal of unsafe work in accordance with the Workers' Compensation Act, Occupational Health and Safety Regulations Sections 3.12 and 3.13 (view CUPE's [Refusing Unsafe Work Health and Safety Fact sheet](#)). A [step-by-step how-to guide](#) is also available.

Job Security (CSSEA Agencies)

As the week progresses, we will be having more discussions between CSSBA and CSSEA and will communicate that to you as quickly as possible. Meanwhile, I'd like to remind you that, as per CSSEA's website, the Deputy Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction has confirmed that provincial funding arrangements with contracted social services providers remain in place. Employers have been asked to keep the lines of communication with their funding ministry or agency open and are advised to consult funders to determine ways to adapt programs so services can still be delivered safely. If, after consultation with government, it is determined that services should be reduced or suspended due to the threat of COVID-19 transmission, Employers will continue to receive funding.

Redeployment to another Job or Task (CSSEA Agencies)

We have been informed that there may be a need for redeployment within certain agencies to meet the critical service needs of some clients. CSSEA has agreed that these redeployment plans should be done in collaboration with the Unions. Our primary focus is to ensure that our members feel safe and capable in the role to which you are redeployed, should that happen.

Agencies who are not part of CSSEA

I'd like to remind all Locals who have agencies who are NOT part of CSSEA to continue to pursue discussions with those employers around continuity of wages, and to look at other ways to ensure our members can usefully contribute during these tumultuous times. Some possible ideas are:

- Retraining workers to assist with other parts of the operation;
- Applying to provide childcare for critical workers; or
- Having workers assist colleagues with language barriers while applying for financial assistance.

Some of my colleagues are working on framework and guidelines to continue discussions with these Employers, which will outline ideas for continuation of recall rights and seniority beyond the current language, as well as other processes. Like everything else, as soon as it is available, it will be sent to you.

Support for Child Care Providers

Parents who can, should care for children at home. Childcare providers that stay open will be eligible to get seven times their average monthly funding from government, which is expected to cover approximately 75% of a group facility's average monthly operating expenses. They will also get ECE wage enhancements for their staff. Eligible centres that close can get up to two times their average monthly funding from government, which should cover about 20% of their monthly operating expenses. In return, all these childcare providers cannot charge parents fees for any periods of closure or for any vacant spaces while they are open, including if a parent chooses to temporarily withdraw a child due to COVID-19. They must also agree to reserve spaces for families that were accessing their services before the pandemic, even if these families choose to temporarily withdraw, so families can be assured their spot will still be there once the pandemic passes.

Safe Worksites

The provincial health officer has provided clarification of necessary precautions for safe construction workplaces:

- There should be no more than 50 people in the same space in any circumstances.
- Where possible, employees should maintain a distance of two metres apart from each other.
- Post signage that limits the number of occupants in any elevator to four people at a time.
- Reduce in-person meetings and other gatherings and hold site meetings in open spaces or outside.
- Increase the number of handwashing stations and post signage that identifies their location. Where plumbed facilities are impracticable, employers must provide access to portable washroom and hand-washing facilities. Those facilities must be maintained in good working order and must be provided with the supplies necessary for their use.
- Maintain a list of employees that are currently working on sites and update this list daily.

- All common areas and surfaces should be cleaned at the end of each day. Examples include washrooms, shared offices, common tables, desks, light switches and door handles.
- Anyone with COVID-19-like symptoms, such as sore throat, fever, sneezing or coughing, must self-isolate at home for 14 days.
- Employers should reassess their work environment every day and keep updated with the information posted on the [Province's website](#).
- More information from WorkSafe can be found [here](#).

Single Site Work Orders

As some of you are aware various Health Authorities have issued single site work orders – that is, orders restricting long term care and/or assisted living staff to working at a single worksite. The processes of the orders have commenced in some cases but not completed in any of them. There is a significant exercise of data collection to enable such orders and those processes have not completed under any of the orders. As we get more information on how this will proceed, we will be communicating that to you.

Understanding the Announcements about EI and other Income Supports

CUPE is working diligently to process and provide information from the government as it becomes available. The latest news will always be found on [CUPE's website](#). You can also send members to the following resources:

- [CUPE's backgrounder on the Federal Support Announcement](#).
- [Income supports for workers during the Coronavirus pandemic](#).

Temporary Wage Subsidies for Employers

The Federal government announced this plan, and details can be found at the [CRA website](#).

Continued Updates

As you know, there are updates coming at an unprecedented pace. Since beginning this document, there have been several announcements at the Municipal, Provincial, and Federal levels. I will endeavour to compile relevant information and send it out to you as quickly as possible, but encourage everyone to consult credible sources, such as the BC Centre for Disease Control, on their own as well.

Reminders

- CSSEA is not allowing their member agencies to engage in Local agreements around continuation of wages.
- Deputy Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction has confirmed that provincial funding arrangements with contracted social services providers remain in place.

- Please forward numbers and agency names for cases of layoffs to your CUPE Staff Rep.
- Please forward numbers of confirmed COVID-19 cases to your CUPE Staff Rep.
- CSSBA meets Tuesdays; CSSEA & CSSBA meet Wednesdays – so you can expect information after those meetings.
- CSSBA is in the process of creating an agreement around suspending timelines for grievances, arbitrations, etc., and when ready it will be sent out to everyone.