

September 25, 2020

Dear Simcoe and Muskoka employers:

In association with significantly increasing rates of COVID-19 in our community as we enter the fall season, and with the [Reopening Ontario after COVID-19](#) framework and Stage 3, the following communication is provided to you in assisting your business/organization. The Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) strongly encourages Simcoe and Muskoka businesses and organizations to remain vigilant in their efforts to reduce the spread of COVID-19. As referenced by the Public Health Agency of Canada, keeping COVID-19 to manageable levels is a shared responsibility to protect our health, social and economic well-being. We can all take individual and organizational action to slow the spread of COVID-19 by considering our personal and organizational risks and taking the appropriate precautions. Based on our local experience to date of factors that may be contributing to COVID-19 spread, the following recommendations will assist you in continuing your efforts to stop the spread:

Temporary ('temp') Staffing Agencies

SMDHU is aware that several employers in a range of sectors use temporary staffing agencies as a means of adding staff to their businesses and organizations during busier periods in their operational cycle. Further, some businesses may use such agencies throughout the year. SMDHU strongly recommends that all employers using temporary staffing agencies ensure that protocols are in place whereby:

- Employers should ensure that all employees, including temporary staffing agency workers, are screened daily prior to commencing work in your business/organization using the [provincial screening tool](#) (at a minimum). Active screening (where screening is conducted by or reported to the employer) is preferred as a more protective approach than passive screening (where no reporting is required). Anyone failing the provincial screening tool should not attend the workplace; they should self-isolate at home and seek testing. Contact information (name, address, email, and telephone number) for each employee should be on file and retrievable by the temporary staffing agency and the business/organization who are using staff.
- Employers should require that the temporary staffing agency screen employees prior to travelling to the workplace. For all employees, temporary staffing agency workers should also be screened upon arrival to the workplace (or provide proof of screening). In some instances, temporary staffing agencies will transport employees in groups, and therefore, employees who fail the screening should be restricted from travelling.
- When temporary staffing agency staff are provided with group transportation, there should be appropriate preventive measures in place during transit, including physical distancing (which may thereby reduce vehicle capacity) and use of face coverings. Further consultation on requirements can be considered through the Ontario Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development or the local public health unit.

Physical distancing, face coverings, screening and hygiene

In accordance with SMDHU's instructions on July 15, 2020, the following [instructions](#) were provided to all employers/persons responsible for businesses or organizations within the SMDHU service area:

1. To the fullest extent possible, ensure effective measures are in place to maintain physical distancing amongst all employees and clients.

Barrie:
15 Sperling Drive
Barrie, ON
L4M 6K9
705-721-7520
FAX: 705-721-1495

Collingwood:
280 Pretty River Pkwy.
Collingwood, ON
L9Y 4J5
705-445-0804
FAX: 705-445-6498

Cookstown:
2-25 King Street S.
Cookstown, ON
L0L 1L0
705-458-1103
FAX: 705-458-0105

Gravenhurst:
2-5 Pineridge Gate
Gravenhurst, ON
P1P 1Z3
705-684-9090
FAX: 705-684-9887

Huntsville:
34 Chaffey St.
Huntsville, ON
P1H 1K1
705-789-8813
FAX: 705-789-7245

Midland:
A-925 Hugel Ave.
Midland, ON
L4R 1X8
705-526-9324
FAX: 705-526-1513

Orillia:
120-169 Front St. S.
Orillia, ON
L3V 4S8
705-325-9565
FAX: 705-325-2091

- a. We would add that lunch rooms and other common areas for staff (i.e. break rooms or areas where people congregate) have been potential sites of exposure and should be arranged to ensure distancing is maintained.
2. Unless the nature of work requires the use of a medical mask, to the fullest extent possible, ensure all individuals wear a non-medical mask (for example, a face covering or a homemade cloth mask) when physical distancing is challenging or not possible.
 - a. Indoor areas of a building accessible only to employees and areas that are outside, whether or not covered (such as restaurant patios) are exempt from these requirements. However, we would add that an employer can make the determination to institute mask wearing in these additional settings if they feel it is appropriate, as an additional precaution. Consultation with the Ontario Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development may be required to ensure compliance with the Ontario Occupational Health and Safety Act.
3. Implement screening practices for employees and members of the public, including requiring those who are ill to stay home and be advised to be tested for COVID-19.
 - a. We would add that active screening (conducted by or reported to the employer) is preferred over passive screening (not reported). If staff are conducting screening on site, they would be required to adhere to appropriate precautions - ideally behind a barrier to protect from droplet and contact spread.
4. Promote excellent hygiene practices including hand hygiene, and cough and sneeze etiquette.

Cohorting

As indicated through [a letter dated May 19, 2020](#), SMDHU wishes to stress the value of cohorting staff, in particular for large employers. Cohorting or bubbling refers to the act of ensuring that staff that work together performing similar tasks should remain as a bubble or team during breaks (i.e. lunch), meetings, or in entering/leaving the building where possible with limiting interaction with others. The act of cohorting limits contact with employees in the organization outside of the bubble, which in the event of a positive COVID-19 case within the bubble, limits the potential spread of the virus to more people than necessary. This is advantageous since the employer limits the number of close contacts that would be required to isolate (and therefore not be permitted to work) and more importantly, limit a large scale outbreak in the building.

Should you have any questions about these recommendations or if you are seeking materials and resources to assist your business, please contact our health connection line at 705-721-7520 or 1-877-721-7520.

Sincerely,

ORIGINAL Signed By:

Charles Gardner, MD, CCFP, MHSc, FRCPC
Medical Officer of Health

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