

# WorkSafeBC Guidelines for Creating a Safe Work Environment for the Settlement and Integration Sector

## TRANSITIONING TO COMMUNICABLE DISEASE PREVENTION

DEVELOPED BY AMSSA & WORKSAFE BC



Update: August 2021

*As of July 1, 2021 employers are no longer required to maintain a COVID-19 Safety Plan, and can instead transition to communicable disease prevention. The following document reflects these changes.*

*AMSSA created this document to complement existing documents created by WorkSafeBC which can be found on their website.*

*See AMSSA's [COVID-19 Resources](#) web page. For more information on supporting migrant workers during COVID-19, please visit the [Migrant Worker Hub](#).*

# Introduction

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The settlement and integration sector works with newcomers, including refugees, refugee claimants, immigrants, migrant workers, international students and naturalized citizens. Organizations providing settlement and integration services are often not-for-profit organizations and are funded by multiple funders including Federal and Provincial Government departments. Examples of the services provided in the sector are settlement and resettlement services, language instruction, employment programming, trauma counselling and housing supports.

The Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies of BC (AMSSA) is the provincial umbrella organization for the settlement and integration sector. AMSSA supports the sector through professional development programming, knowledge mobilization, as well as through various committees, partnerships and working groups. At the start of the pandemic, with the input of AMSSA members, AMSSA in collaboration with WorkSafeBC developed guidelines for creating a safe work environment for the settlement and integration sector in BC. With BC being in phase 3 of BC's Restart Plan, AMSSA again consulted with its members and WorkSafeBC to update these guidelines accordingly.

## Overview of Guidelines

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These guidelines are intended for organizations providing in-person settlement and integration services to all newcomers regardless of immigration status. Organizations may also benefit from reviewing other WorkSafeBC created guidelines related to **events and gatherings**, **agricultural temporary foreign workers**, and **overnight camps for children or youth**.

Where applicable, organizations must also follow any guidance from the Provincial Health Officer that would be applicable and relevant to their organization and the services being offered.

Organizations will need to create their own policies regarding a safe work environment as part of transitioning to communicable disease prevention. There is no requirement to post these updated policies or have them approved by WorkSafeBC.

While COVID-19 safety plans are no longer required, organizations may also choose to keep their COVID-19 safety plans in place.

The following guidelines have been created to support organizations in the transition to communicable disease prevention and to assist organizations to develop their own guidelines. This document is not meant to substitute organizational guides, plans, policies, or procedures.

## TRANSITIONING TO A COMMUNICABLE DISEASE PREVENTION PLAN HAS 4 STEPS

### Step 1: Understanding the Risk

(From the WorkSafeBC website)

Preventing communicable disease involves taking ongoing measures to reduce the risk of communicable disease transmission in your workplace. It also involves implementing additional measures when advised to do so by Public Health during periods of elevated risk.

The level of risk of certain communicable diseases, including COVID-19, may increase from time to time or on a seasonal basis. This may occur at a local or regional level, or within a certain workplace.

Monitor and review communicable disease-related information issued by your regional medical health officer or the **Provincial Health Officer** if it's related to your industry, region, or workplace. This includes orders, guidance, notices, and recommendations issued by a medical health officer or the Provincial Health Officer.

### Step 2: Selecting Protocols to Reduce the Risk

(From the WorkSafeBC website)

**THE FOLLOWING 5 MEASURES SHOULD BE THE MAIN COMPONENTS OF YOUR COMMUNICABLE DISEASE PREVENTION. IMPLEMENT AND MAINTAIN THESE MEASURES AT ALL TIMES.**

1. Implement policies to support staff who have symptoms of a communicable disease (e.g., fever or chills, coughing, diarrhea) so they can avoid being at the workplace when sick.
2. Provide hand-hygiene facilities with appropriate supplies (see [section 4.85](#) of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation). Use policies and signage to remind workers to **wash their hands** regularly and to **cover coughs and sneezes**.
3. Maintain a clean environment through routine cleaning processes that are appropriate for your industry and work practices.
4. Make sure building **ventilation** is adequate and ventilation systems are properly maintained and functioning as designed. For more information, see [section 4.72](#) of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation.
5. Support employees in receiving **vaccinations for COVID-19** and other vaccine-preventable conditions.

#### **ADDITIONAL MEASURES TO IMPLEMENT AS ADVISED BY PUBLIC HEALTH:**

During a period of elevated risk, the medical health officer or Provincial Health Officer will provide information and guidance about the risk and how you can reduce it. The measures that you'll need to implement will depend on the type of disease and the methods of transmission.

- Follow all direction from medical health officers and your regional health authority.
- Follow all orders, guidance, recommendations, and notices issued by the Provincial Health Officer that are relevant to your industry, region, or workplace.
- Depending on the guidance that public health officials provide, you may need to assess the workplace to identify areas, activities, and processes that may pose a risk to workers. You may also need to implement appropriate control measures to reduce the risk, following the direction of Public Health. WorkSafeBC has maintained key COVID-19 protocols that you can refer to. You can use these as appropriate and as advised by Public Health during periods of increased risk.

## Step 3: Communicate Measures and Protocols

**(From the WorkSafeBC website)**

Make sure everyone entering the workplace, including workers from other employers, receives information about your measures, practices, and policies for managing communicable disease.

- Ensure all workers understand the measures in place at your workplace.
- Provide all your workers with information on policies for staying home when sick and working from home. The following resources are available for employers to support workers working from home:
  - [Working from home: A guide to keeping your workers healthy and safe](#)
  - [Setting up, organizing, and working comfortably in your home workspace](#)
- Post signage (in multiple languages) in your workplace to support the measures you have in place.
- Make sure your supervisors are knowledgeable about your measures, practices, and policies, and incorporate these into supervision practices at the workplace.
- Provide information, signage, and materials to workers in a language they understand.
- Be mindful that some aspects of managing communicable disease in the workplace may raise privacy and confidentiality issues. Seek advice on these issues as necessary.

## Step 4: Monitor Your Workplace and Update Plan as Necessary

**(From the WorkSafeBC website)**

Continuously evaluate and update your plan to reflect changing risk levels and work practices.

- Joint health and safety committees and worker representatives play an important role in identifying and resolving workplace health and safety issues. When identifying and resolving safety issues, involve joint health and safety committees or worker health and safety representatives (or, in smaller workplaces, other workers).
- Use workplace inspections and ongoing supervision in the workplace to ensure measures are functioning properly, followed, and maintained.

- Monitor the guidance, notices, orders, and recommendations from Public Health (as required in Step 1). Adjust your plan as necessary.
- Monitor your workplace and risk level.
- Change your measures, practices, and policies as necessary. Update your plan to reflect changes in your workplace, including work processes, staff, and premises. Make sure workers know how to raise health and safety concerns.

## Vulnerabilities of Clients Accessing Settlement and Integration Services

Clients who access settlement and integration services are newcomers, including refugees, refugee claimants, immigrants, migrant workers, international students and naturalized citizens. The immigration pathway of a client and their length of time in Canada will influence the type of services required. Some clients who access services experience the following vulnerabilities which will influence the type of services that the client will access:

- Low language knowledge of English or French
- Low literacy levels
- Financial barriers to accessing technology (internet and devices), hand sanitizer and non-medical face masks
- Lack of understanding of Canadian systems and culture
- Violence or trauma survivors, they may suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or have other related mental/emotional symptoms/challenges.

## Tasks Performed by the Settlement and Integration Sector

### GENERAL GUIDANCE APPLICABLE TO ALL TASKS

It's up to the individual employer which health and safety protocols are kept in place. As per Step 2 of the communicable disease prevention plan, organizations are required to:

- Develop policies on how workers should assess their own health and suitability to work including procedures that staff would need to follow if they are feeling ill
- Support staff who have symptoms of communicable disease
- Support staff in receiving vaccinations
- Provide staff with access and information about sanitization options (handwashing stations, wipes or hand sanitizer) available at the workplace and who will be responsible for providing and restocking the sanitization options
- Ensure cleanliness of work environments
- Ensure building ventilations are adequate and properly maintained.

## COMMUNICATION

Employers should communicate the following:

- The general measures of communicable disease prevention with staff
- Illness policy and safety protocols with clients through email, Whatsapp, social media or website before entry into the organization in multiple languages (consider recording a video in multiple languages to educate and inform clients about service delivery changes)
- Ensure that clients are aware that if they are feeling unwell or are displaying COVID-19 symptoms that the meeting will be held virtually or that the meeting will be rescheduled without any negative consequences for the client.

## Health Assessments

Health assessments are no longer required by WorkSafeBC, however, individual employers may choose to keep them in place as part of their workplace policies. Communicate related policies with your staff and clients.

## Vaccinations, Mask, and Physical Distancing

- Masks and other forms of protective barriers, while recommended, are no longer required, however individual employers may choose to keep these protocols in place as part of their policies.
- Employers are not required to limit the number of staff and clients in their workplace. In cases of elevated risk, a medical health officer or the Provincial Health Officer may direct employers in a specific region, industry, or workplace to implement occupancy limits.
- It's important to communicate related policies with staff and clients.
- Look to potentially create alternative options for staff or clients who cannot comply with these protocols such as offering online appointments only to unmasked or unvaccinated clients.
- Vaccinations are not required to maintain workplace health and safety as part of WorkSafeBC policies. Be mindful of privacy and human rights laws, when implementing policies requiring vaccines in the workplace.
- Proof of vaccination does not need to be requested by service providers.
- Unless they have legitimate medical reasons (such as immune suppressed people) there is no obligation to accommodate unvaccinated employees.

### For more information:

- Read the [Canadian Human Rights Commission - Employer's Duty to Accommodate](#)
- View the [Guidance and updates from the Provincial Health Officer](#)

## Working from Home or a Hybrid Model

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As of September 7, 2021, with BC's planned full re-opening of workplaces, it's up to the individual employer to decide if staff will be required to return to work in the office.

For employers, with staff continuing to work from home or who are in a hybrid model, employers need to develop a health and safety policy for working from home. This policy should require workers to assess their workspace and report any potential hazards to their manager. Your policy should also include the following information:

- Protocols for evacuating from the worker's home to a safe location if needed and how workers can contact you in case of emergency
- Safe work practices and how to report any work-related incidents or injury
- Communication protocols and procedures for check-ins if a worker is working alone
- Requirements for education and training you and your workers adequately
- Identify ergonomic considerations.

Employers are to provide staff who are working from home with information and checklists on what workers may need to consider for their home office.

Employers and staff should be aware that if an injury occurs during at home work hours, depending on the particular situation, this may or may not be covered by a WorkSafeBC workplace injury claim.

### For more information:

- If an employee is to spend long periods of time on the computer the employer should send them the [How to Make Your Computer Station Fit You](#) WorkSafeBC document
- Read the [Health & Safety Responsibilities when Working from Home](#) WorkSafeBC document

## In-Home Services

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Staff should follow employer requirements when it comes to maintaining health and safety while visiting a client's residence.

**Example:** If an employer requires that staff wear a mask while visiting a client's residence, you must follow the employer set requirement.

## Transportation

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Masks and physical distancing on public transportation is recommended but not required.

### For more information:

- [COVID-19 Information for the Commercial Passenger Vehicle Industry in B.C.](#)
- [Translink COVID-19 Policies](#)

## Indoor Classes, Field Trips and Conversation Circles

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Currently, as part of phase 3 of BC's Restart Plan, indoor gatherings that include LINC/CLIC classes, are limited to 50 people or 50% of the capacity, whichever is greater. Outdoor gatherings and activities such as field trips have a capacity of 5,000 people or 50% capacity, whichever is greater. Please note that these limits are only for "seated events".

All outdoor and indoor group sports for adults and youth are allowed.

In September 2021, K-12 education is planning for a full return to classrooms.

### For more information:

- Visit the Province of BC's [COVID-19 safe schools](#) webpage

## In-Person Appointments

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It is up to the employer to decide what their workplace policies for providing in-person appointments are.

Employers should look to accommodate staff or clients who cannot comply with these policies, within the limits of those accommodations not putting an unreasonable strain on business. In certain cases, such as having a legitimate medical reason, the employer is required to accommodate the staff member, within limits.

## Childcare and Childminding

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### For more information on supporting child care providers during COVID-19:

- Visit the Province of BC's [Child Care Health and Safety](#) webpage



## Child and Youth Overnight Camps

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Sectors considered elevated risk includes child and youth overnight camps, therefore, there are specific regulations for organizers of overnight camps for children and youth.

### For more information:

- Read the [Order of the Provincial Health Officer Overnight Camps for Children or Youth](#) document

## COVID-19 Paid Sick-Leave Reimbursement

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Until December 31, 2021, if you do not currently provide employees paid sick-leave, the Province of BC will reimburse you up to \$200 a day through the Employer Reimbursement Program for COVID-19-related paid sick leave wages paid to an employee.

### For more information:

- Learn about employer requirements relating to [paid sick leave](#)
- How to apply to the [COVID-19 paid sick-leave reimbursement](#)

## Enforcement

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It is the employer's responsibility to protect the staff from potential confrontations. Employers should have a policy for bullying and harassment, and procedures for reporting; this includes bullying and harassment by clients:

- [Developing a Policy Statement Template: Workplace Bullying and Harassment](#)
- [Developing Reporting Procedures](#)
- [Developing Investigation Procedures](#)
- [Consider Others. Everyone is moving forward at their own pace poster.](#)

# Other Helpful Resources to Prepare for BC's Reopening

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## Information for specific sectors considered at elevated risk:

- [Food and Liquor Serving Premises](#)
- [Events and Gatherings](#)
- [Agricultural Temporary Foreign Workers](#)
- [Overnight Camps for Children and Youth](#)
- [Industrial Camps](#)

## Additional Tips, Resources and Informative Posters:

- [BC's Restart: A plan to bring us back together](#)
- [A human rights approach to proof of vaccination during COVID-19 pandemic](#)
- [Top Ten Human Rights Tips for Employers during COVID-19](#)
- [Migrant Worker Hub COVID-19 Resources and Updates](#)
- [Golden Rules for Everyday Life Poster](#)