

COVID-19 Update for NBMC Members, March 17th, 2020

The New Brunswick Multicultural Council (NBMC) has compiled the following guidance to assist its members to develop plans to prepare, prevent and protect staff and clients as the COVID-19 outbreak continues to evolve globally.

The settlement sector is unique in that it serves clients travelling internationally and arriving from abroad. NBMC wants to ensure the safety and health of all staff, clients and potential clients, as well as the general public. The [Public Health Agency of Canada's information sheet](#) is available in 10+ languages and is a good resource for our members' clients whose first language may not be might not English or French.

Managing your Organizations Response to COVID 19 is your #1 Job Right Now

As organizations, you will need to manage safety, manage communication, and manage change. This public health crisis requires that you reset your calendars, work-plans, and priorities so that managing the impact on your organization, staff and clients becomes your highest priority. As employers you have legal obligations. For a resource that explains areas for you to consider, [visit this website](#). Communication with your staff and clients will be critical to successfully managing over the coming weeks and possibly months. You are encouraged to set up new communication protocols so that information is flowing to you and from you to the staff and clients you support. This may include:

- Setting time aside for virtual daily check-ins with key staff;
- Making time for regular sector-wide conference calls with NBMC members; and,
- Being very proactive about communicating updates via social media and through email to clients, staff and the community.

Staff and Client Protection:

- Given IRCC recommendations, NBMC recommends that agencies suspend all non-essential services to clients, until further notice. ***Essential services include for vulnerable newcomers including seniors, Government Assisted Refugees, LGBTQ newcomers, and others deemed vulnerable by your organization;***
- Implement a work-from-home policy for those staff who are able to continue advancing their work remotely;
- **IMPORTANT TO NOTE:** the Government of Canada will be closing its border to all non-citizens and non-permanent residents with the exception of American citizens.

- NBMC strongly encourages all staff of immigrant serving agencies, as well as their clients, to avoid **all non-essential domestic travel**. [Check the Government of Canada's latest advice before travelling](#);
- Insist and enforce [social distancing measures](#), such as avoiding close contact with others, including handshakes and hugs;
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after using the washroom and when preparing food (use alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available)
- Post relevant signage around workplaces and making disinfectant supplies available, such as wipes and hand sanitizer for those staff who may be accessing your premises;
- [Increase regular sanitation activities](#) in common spaces where meetings and gatherings take place, and ask your building management to provide updates on their operating procedures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 for those staff who may be accessing your premises; and,
- Insist that staff and clients stay home if they are sick.

Visit the [Public Health Ontario website](#) for more information on Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Settings, How to Self-Monitor, How to Self-Isolate, and Self-Isolation: a Guide for Caregivers, Household Members and Close Contacts. The guides are available in English, French, Simplified Chinese, Farsi, Italian, and Korean.

Employer Responsibilities and Employee Rights:

Employers are responsible for protecting the health and safety of employees at work. They are required to implement preventative measures to ensure employees are not exposed to conditions that could be harmful to their health or safety while working.

If there is a risk of exposure to COVID-19 for employees while working, employers must:

- identify the risk
- assess the risk, and
- implement proper controls through their Hazard Prevention Program.

If the employer requires personal protective equipment, they must provide training and procedures to employees. Employees must comply with the employer's procedures.

Employee rights under Part II of the *Canada Labour Code*

Under the *Code*, employees have 3 basic rights:

- The right to know;
- The right to participate;
- The right to refuse dangerous work

Definition of danger: "any hazard, condition or activity that could reasonably be expected to be an imminent or serious threat to the life or health of a person exposed to it before the hazard or condition can be corrected or the activity altered."

For more information about refusal to work under Part II of the Code: [Right to refuse dangerous work](#).

Pre-Arrival Contact:

IMPORTANT TO NOTE: the Government of Canada will be closing its border to all non-citizens and non-permanent residents with the exception of American citizens.

For staff with pre-arrival contact with clients, it will be important to inform these clients that settlement services are widely being suspended until further notice and they may not be able to access these services should they arrive during the suspension, unless for vulnerable clients.

In addition, the New Brunswick Department of Education and Early Childhood Development requires that all individuals travelling from international destinations after March 8, 2020 avoid entering public schools, early learning facilities (i.e. daycares) or school district offices for 14 days. This will impact the registration of children in public schools and early learning facilities, and when newly-arrived children from abroad may be able to start attending school and daycare.

Clients should also be urged to consult the ongoing updates related to travel advisories and guidance from both [Public Health Agency of Canada website](#) and the Government of New Brunswick's [Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health \(Public Health\) website](#).

Organizations and their staff are strongly encouraged to stay informed and up to date on the current risks associated with travelers by following [travel health notices](#) issued by the Public Health Agency of Canada.

Exploratory Visits:

Notice from the Government of New Brunswick –

The Province of New Brunswick has made the decision to suspend all non-essential international travel by its staff and representatives in order to avoid exposing any individual, community or nation to an undue or additional risk of infection or transmission of this virus.

To anyone intending to embark on an exploratory visit to our province: Please do not embark on an exploratory visit at this time. If your travel arrangements are already made and cannot be changed at all, we apologize for any inconveniences that this creates. This measure is being taken in the interest of protecting you and all around you.

Please note that due to the unpredictability of the situation, it is quite possible that some people or organizations will no longer be able to accommodate you during your visit, and that the objectives of the visit may not be achievable at this time. We want to encourage you to be aware of the latest World Health Organization (WHO) advisories, including those related to international travel.

Meetings and Gatherings:

NBMC recommends that all group activities and in-person meetings be cancelled until further notice and all non-essential settlement services be suspended until further notice.

In cases where meetings must happen with vulnerable clients, staff of member agencies must be informed and prepared to implement social distancing, proper sanitation, and clients must be informed of their responsibility for social distancing.

For travel within or outside of the province, risks should be assessed in real time on a case by case basis, factoring in the latest information on affected areas and any travel health notices. In some cases, it may be better to postpone travel and attend virtual meetings. Being prepared for this possibility will maximize safety and support business continuity.

New Arrivals:

NBMC suggests that its members implement travel advisories for their clients and staff.

Advise: Clients or staff who intend to travel internationally or nationally are to disclose such travel to their program coordinator or supervisor prior to departure and return as this will impact service delivery upon their return.

Require: Clients or staff who have personally traveled internationally must self-isolate for 14 days after such travel before returning to an immigrant serving agency.

Require: Clients or staff who have had contact with an individual who has traveled internationally must self-isolate themselves for 14 days before returning to an immigrant serving agency. All clients, program coordinators, teachers and volunteers should be made aware of this information and must strictly adhere to the public health advisories.

If you feel sick and/or believe you are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19:

Symptoms such as fever, cough, difficulty breathing may take up to 14 days to appear. Should an individual who has recently traveled outside the country experience non-specific symptoms (such as headache, congestion, achiness, feeling unwell) they should separate themselves from others and stay home to monitor themselves further. Should these symptoms progress to include fever or cough, the individual should:

- continue to stay at home;
- immediately call Tele-Care at 811;
- describe their symptoms and travel history; and,
- follow instructions carefully.

Follow and share reliable information

Make sure that you get and share accurate and updated information about COVID-19 from reliable sources. The Public Health Agency of Canada is a reliable source of information, as is the Government of New Brunswick.

The situation related to the coronavirus is always changing, we cannot predict the evolving travel restrictions and/or self-isolation requirements at home or abroad. For up-to-date information and guidelines please refer to the [Public Health Agency's website](#) and the Government of New Brunswick's [Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health \(Public Health\) website](#).