

Enforcement information for communities

October 13, 2021

It's important that Northern Health, the FNHA, and community leaders work together in our response to the fourth wave of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The important leadership role of the Provincial Health Officer

- Following Provincial Health Orders and recommendations is critical. Everyone in BC must follow PHO Orders regardless if there are known cases in the community or not. Safety measures should be followed with the assumption that anyone in the community could have COVID-19. See: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/current-health-topics/covid-19-novel-coronavirus#orders>)
- The aim of public health orders is to manage and reduce the spread of COVID-19 by encouraging physical distancing. Compliance and Enforcement Officers provide assistance with Public Health Act Orders with the following principles in mind:
 - Focussing on public education and voluntary compliance without the need for law enforcement interventions.
 - A balanced approach to maintaining public trust to ensure essential services can operate while following Public Health Orders.
 - Following these principles, supporting people to come forward for testing and treatment, and to enable COVID-19 case monitoring and contact tracing.

The community's role in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic

Messages from local leaders and champions are an important part of this role. Community leaders can encourage and inform their community members by sharing messages like these:

- Maintain social distancing (a minimum of 2 metres/6 feet). When it's difficult to maintain this distance with people not in your bubble, wear a tight-fitting mask. As well, masks are required to be worn by everyone age 5 and older in indoor public places. Please remember all masks are not equal in providing protection. For example, shields alone provide very little protection. See [hcbc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/compliance_and_enforcement_guidance_march_31_2020-002.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/current-health-topics/covid-19-novel-coronavirus#orders)
- People who cannot wear a mask or who cannot put on or remove a mask on their own are exempt. Some people cannot wear a mask for psychological, behavioural or health conditions. Some people may also need to remove their masks to communicate due to a hearing impairment. Please be respectful of people who can't wear a mask.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, for at least 20 seconds. Using soap and water is the single most effective way of reducing the spread of infection.
- If a sink is not available, you can use alcohol-based hand rubs (ABHRs) to clean your hands, as long as they aren't visibly soiled. If they are visibly soiled, use a wipe and then an ABHR.
- Don't touch your face, eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Regularly clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces.

- Don't share food, drinks, utensils, etc.
- Facemasks can be used as an additional layer to prevent the spread of COVID-19 by containing a person's droplets. As mentioned above, masks are required to be worn by everyone age 5 and older in indoor public places. Please visit the BCCDC's masks page for up-to-date information: bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/prevention-risks/masks.
- If you're sick:
 - Stay home and avoid close contact with others in your home, if possible.
 - Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash and wash your hands.
 - To decide if you need to be tested for COVID-19, use the BC COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool at bc.thrive.health/covid19/en, or visit the testing page at bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/testing.

People in my community aren't following the Provincial Health Orders – what should I do?

See these recommendations:

- It's important to not shame or blame others - stigma has played a significant role in driving the spread of COVID-19 in the north. Focussing on how people are following the orders (instead how they are not following them), and being kind and supportive is key to preventing stigma in communities.
- Use an education approach to help non-complying community members understand the importance of everyone working together to protect each other from the spread of COVID-19.
- If community members are not following the recommendations of the Provincial Health Officer, the recommended approach is to pursue focused communications to the community at large, and also share messages directly to the groups of people not complying.

Northern Health Environmental Health is the lead agency in receiving and investigating complaints, and enforcing PHO orders. Environmental Health will work with other agencies as needed and are guided by policy direction from the Provincial Health Officer.

Role of Compliance and Enforcement Officers (C & EOs)

- C & EOs are bylaw enforcement officers and other provincial compliance officers such as liquor and cannabis control and licencing inspectors, gambling enforcement and investigations officers, and community safety personnel.
- C & EOs are not authorized to detain an individual as a result of a contravention or suspected contravention of a Public Health Order.
- C & EOs are also not authorised to exercise any authority to issue a fine or penalty.

Supporting vulnerable people in the community

- Communities should work with available partners in the community to support vulnerable people that are at higher risk of contracting COVID-19. One example might be working with BC Housing to develop accommodation options for the homeless population to support their ability to self-isolate.