

PATHWAYS TO INDEPENDENCE

May 29, 2020, 1:00pm to 3:30pm
Zoom Virtual Conferencing Meeting Notes

More than ever, people with disabilities must come together as a unified group in society. How we support and help each other through crisis will strengthen us as a community and as individuals. Living independently is a choice and comes with additional challenges; through unification people with disabilities make a difference; each voice is important.

June Meeting Date to Be Announced

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The goal of this meeting was for Peers to come together and share information and updates on current issues facing people with disabilities. The meeting was attended by approximately 85 people.

1. COVID-19 Updates - Chris Marks

- a. In Phase 2 we can expand our social circle to 6 and it should be the same 6 people
- b. Gatherings of 50 people in public is the maximum permitted with social distancing being observed
- c. British Columbia is one of the safest places in the world, but continued precautions are necessary. Wash your hands and follow prevention precautions.
- d. Pay attention to limiting time in close quarters in spaces with poor ventilation
- e. Loss of smell may be a sign that you want to self isolate
- f. Don't be afraid of going outdoors

2. Personal Protection Equipment (PPE)

- a. A peer advised that Vancouver Island Health has stated to CSIL Employers that they do not have PPE available
- b. SafeCareBC is assisting CSIL Employers with masks and hand sanitizers
 - I. <https://www.safecarebc.ca/pperequest/>
- c. Chris Marks provided the following link, stating he has also ordered from Alert First Aid;
 - I. https://www.alertfirstaid.com/medical-supplies/disaster-supplies/covid-19-supplies?mc_cid=ad670781cb&mc_eid=1469a7fe1f
- d. A reminder for everyone to complete the SafeCareBC survey as it will help them understand the needs for PPE by people with disabilities.
 - I. <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/5P3CYCV?fbclid=IwAR35Rj4BmIUy98BFsbQRiIWnOq74T9Ws9qw0y-ohzT60ZwK4WghkKmM9Ru0>

3. Home Support Hours Discussion

- a. A peer advised that the Fraser Health Authority has been pushing unrealistic time management protocols; i.e. 10 minutes for lunch
 - I. Other peers spoke of similar difficulties with other Health Authorities
 - II. Not taking into consideration that people with disabilities are often unable to eat that fast, preparation for, and observing prevention protocols does not fit into a 10 minute window
 - III. Support workers require time for hand washing, using hand sanitizers, hygiene protocols for environment
 - IV. Managing cleanliness and observing good hygiene practices in the CSIL Employer's home includes garbage disposal, sorting and setting out recyclables, wiping down surfaces to reduce bacteria

4. Mandatory Masks – Michelle Hewitt

- a. The problems is that there some businesses are stating that masks are mandatory and customers are required to wear one in order to shop

- b. This is becoming a barrier for people with disabilities to access services in public areas and this is discriminatory against people who are unable to wear masks due to health reasons and/or would have a difficult time breathing with a mask on.
 - I. These incidents must be reported
- c. Masks may be recommended by they are not mandatory, per the Provincial Health Officer, Dr. Bonnie Henry

Action: Document the business name, date, time and location if you are refused service because you are unable to wear a mask. You can send the information to pathways@ifrcsociety.org

5. CPP-D Update – Michelle Hewitt

- a. People whose only source of income is CPPD are falling through the cracks during this crisis and feel left behind
- b. This is a Federal priority and there is a strong advocacy push which is gaining momentum
- c. On May 20, 2020, Disability Alliance BC sent a letter to Minister Carla Qualtrough, Ministry of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion to call attention to the urgent need for emergency COVID-19 supports for people with disabilities, in particular those people who rely on CPP-Disability (CPP-D) as their main source of income
 - I. <https://disabilityalliancebc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Follow-up-letter-to-Minister-Qualtrough-Re-CPPD-.pdf>

6. Federal Wage Top Up – Ken Kramer, ACE Executive

- a. Ken Kramer reported that on May 12th an email was sent to the Ministry of Health, requesting their plan to pass on the Federal Governments Wage Top up to CSIL Employers.
 - I. The Ministry responded on May 26th and confirmed that eligible CSIL employees will receive the top up. ACE has continued to correspond with the Ministry, and it's been further confirmed that the top up for eligible employees will be retroactive to March 15th.
 - II. It may not be \$4, but there will be something
 - a. **Note:** CSIL Employers will have other costs associated with the top up; CPP, EI, Vacation Pay, Statutory Holidays
 - b. A peer discussion revolved around how the funds will be awarded; either based on monthly CSIL Hours approved or payroll hours paid out, which is different for each employer depending on their own budget.
 - III. They are working on the processes and procedures with the Health Authorities to ensure a coordinated delivery. It will cover the 16 weeks, but as they will be determining employee eligibility, caution is urged on what you communicate to your employees
 - IV. It is very possible that CSIL Employers may not see the funds until the end of the 16 weeks, or even afterwards

Update: The ACE Executives will be meeting with the Ministry of Health the week of June 8th, 2020, to discuss the top up as it relates to the CSIL Program and will report back with additional information.

7. Vancouver Coastal Health CSIL Contract – Ken Kramer, ACE Executive

a. **Terms requiring Review**

I. **“23. Acting Reasonable and Approvals**

*Where this agreement permits, allows or requires us to make a decision, provides us with an option to act or refrain from acting, approve or reject any request, submission or other item or any variation of those requirements, that decision, option or other action **will be undertaken at our sole discretion and will not require us to act reasonably....**”*

II. **“12.2 Your responsibilities during reviews, audits and investigations**

*(c) upon request and at a mutually agreed time, **arranging access** to all sites at which the Services are delivered, **Care Providers and other persons involved in the performance or administration of the Services**”*

b. A strong, formal email addressing this issue with the Ministry of Health and the Health Authorities was sent on May 10, 2020

c. A meeting was held on May 28th, 2020 between the ACE Executives, VCHA and the Ministry of Health

I. 23. Acting Reasonable and Approvals, will be reviewed

- A positive, strong meeting and while no definitive answer, we are very hopeful
- **VCHA acknowledged that people may choose not to sign contracts, until resolution**
- **No repercussions for not signing contract**

II. 12.2 Your responsibility during reviews, audits and investigations

- Their interpretation was for involving staff in the case of extreme situations only
- Review underway
- Requires more clarification in the contract

d. The Vancouver Coastal Health Authority contract of 2018 was a model for the province as the Ministry of Health is striving for consistency across the province.

e. ACE has developed a strong, positive, collaborative relationship with the Ministry and VCHA and by addressing this within the working group, hope to restore the mandate of meaningful cooperation.

f. New clauses should not be arbitrarily entered into contracts without full consultation with the Ministry of Health and the ACE Executives.

8. Essential Visitor Policy – Chris Hofley

a. The Ministry of Health has provided an updated policy with some positive results

I. The updated policy makes clear directives under what circumstances a person with a disability can have their support workers in the hospital

b. Having caregivers available when people with disabilities are in the hospital is crucial, however it is still up to the discretion of the hospital personnel

c. Chris stated that while the policy seems clear it is still up for interpretation. Based on the continued experiences of people with disabilities the hospital’s frontline workers are making choices based on their own personal comfort level

d. The huge weak link in the policy is the appeals policy to Patient Care Quality Office (PCQO)

- I. Significant advocacy needs to be done on this
- e. A reminder for everyone to please complete the very important **Essential Supports Survey** provided by the **Family Institute of BC**
 - I. <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/JB6NNKJ>

9. Translink Update – Laura MacKenrot and Linda McGowan

- a. Handidart
 - I. All drivers have hand sanitizers for themselves and are permitted to physically assist customers
 - II. Very few denials have been reported
 - III. Before COVID-19 over 70% of rides were for one person and 25% for two people
 - IV. Concern is that as requests for rides increase, will they still be able to do physical distancing
 - V. As of June 1st, Handidart fares return to normal
 - VI. Applying for a Handidart complete application (over the phone) takes 3 to 5 days to process
- b. Buses
 - I. The rule is if there is not enough space for a wheelchair user and the next bus is not scheduled to arrive in the next 15 minutes, Operators are supposed to ask if the wheelchair user would like to wait or have them call for a wheelchair accessible taxi
 - II. Taxis are slow in coming, the wait for a taxi can be extremely lengthy during high use hours
 - III. Buses have blocked off the wheelchair spot behind the driver's seat with safety tape
 - a. This is the space where the driver does not have to strap people in
 - b. People who cannot strap themselves in are not able to use transit
 - c. Operators should not be able to refuse requests to be strapped in
- c. Meeting peers report that they have had situations where the Operators did not call for taxis or that the requested taxi's never arrived
 - I. Before and/or during COVID-19
- d. Meeting peer requested clarification on who pays for the taxi
 - I. Coast Mountain Bus Company is responsible for paying the taxi when they order it

10. Coast Mountain Bus Company Updates – George Tomlinson

- a. Effective June 1st, 2020 front doors will reopen to all passengers
 - I. Non-medical masks or face coverings are recommended at transit stops and on-board vehicles
 - II. This is not enforced
 - III. Due to front door loading in effect again, Operators are not expected to secure passengers who are using mobility devices
- b. Bus capacity will be increased to 2/3^{rds} capacity
 - I. Once the bus has reached capacity, Operators will not make any further stops until a passenger onboard requests a stop
- c. If a wheelchair passenger, a passenger with a scooter, or a passenger with a mobility aid requiring a seat in the accessibility spot has to be left behind for any reason, then:

- I. The policy is that the Operator will request the customer's name and destination, and advise the individual the Operator will contact TComm (Transit Communications) who should dispatch an accessible taxi to the bus stop
 - i. However, in most cases you will be waiting for another bus
 - ii. During busy times of the day, the call takes longer to reach TComm
 - iii. It's recommended that that the individual should be prepared to wait for the next bus
 - iv. Please request a transit supervisor to attend which will expedite services
 - v. If the ramp isn't working, request that the Operator contact TComm
- d. Effective June 1st, 2020 all "seat closed" signs will be removed from all Conventional and Community Shuttle buses.
- e. **Coronavirus (COVID-19) Translink Website News**
 - I. <https://new.translink.ca/rider-guide/coronavirus-precautions>

11. Canada Emergency Response Benefit

- a. If you apply, are given the funds, but later determined to be ineligible, you will have to pay them back
- b. You have had to have earned \$5000 in 2019
- c. Government of Canada website links to learn more about the CERB:
 - a. <https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/benefits/apply-for-cerb-with-cra/who-apply.html>
 - b. <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/benefits/ei/cerb-application.html>

12. Minimum Wage Increase

- a. Effective June 1st, 2020 the minimum wage in British Columbia is \$14.60 per hour
 - I. *Minimum wage applies regardless of how employees are paid – hourly, salary, commission or on an incentive basis*

13. CSIL Expense Guidelines, December 2019

- a. A revised CSIL Expense Guideline was released by the Ministry of Health
- b. Revision is the CSIL Employer's ability to pay severance pay
 - I. 11. Severance
 - In order to mitigate severance pay, a CSIL employer is required to provide their employee with written notice as soon as possible but no later than the provisions of the Employment Standards Act (ESA).
 - The CSIL employer will notify the Health Authority as soon as possible if an employee has initiated legal action in relation to the termination of their employment. Failure to notify the Health Authority may impact the Health Authority's decision to fund severance.
 - Severance, in accordance with the provisions of the ESA, is an allowable expense to be paid from the one-month surplus. The Health Authority may approve any further severance amounts in the following circumstances:
 - If the Health Authority agrees that through no fault of their own* a CSIL employer cannot provide the employee with adequate written notice and the severance payment is greater than the surplus, the Health Authority shall fund the difference.

- If a severance payment is a result of legal action and is greater than the surplus, Health Authorities, on a case by case basis, shall consider funding the difference. Any discussions and/or negotiations about such funding will be on a without prejudice basis.

*Examples that qualify as “no fault of their own” include:

- When a CSIL employee is terminated out of concern for the CSIL client’s personal safety;
- Upon death of the client.

Examples that do not qualify as “no fault of their own” include:

- Habitual termination of CSIL employees.
- Failure of the CSIL employer to notify the Health Authority as soon as possible of a pending move, legal action or known termination of the CSIL contract.

14. COVID-19 Safety Plan; Preparation, Prevention and Safe Operation Policy – Hilary Currie

- a. In accordance with Orders from the Provincial Health Officer (PHO), the BC Centre for Disease Control and WorkSafeBC have collaborated to pass a policy to ensure all employers and their workers follow safe and consistent guidelines for the workplace.
- b. The policy requirements were implemented to ensure staff returning to work as well as continued staff, are in a workplace that meets the current COVID-19 protection orders
 - I. Industry Safety (B.C.’s Restart Plan, Phase 1)
 - II. Returning to safe operation (B.C.’s Restart Plan, Phases 2 & 3)
- c. To assist people with disabilities who employ staff, IFRC created a template to help meet the policy requirements
 - I. Employers are required to develop a COVID-19 Safety Plan that outlines the policies, guidelines and procedures they have put in place to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission.
 - II. The template has been tailored to suit the duties of home support in the employer’s residence
 - i. Original WorkSafe Guidelines:
<https://www.worksafebc.com/en/resources/health-safety/checklist/covid-19-safety-plan?lang=en>
 - ii. Template located on the IFRC Website under Pathways:
<https://www.ifrcsociety.org/pathways>
 - III. Disclaimer: This word document is a template only. You are encouraged to review the original WorkSafeBC document, located at the link provided, to ensure that the policy you complete and provide to your staff addresses the staff activities in your home is accurate and meets all WorkSafeBC requirements

15. Future Topics

- a. Peers are urged to email their topic suggestions and requests to pathways@ifrcsociety.org
- b. Every peer brings knowledge to the meetings, be it specialized or experienced, and everyone is encouraged to contribute.

16. Peer Announcements

- a. The COVID-19 Survey published by the BC Centre for Disease Control is **now closed**
 - a. <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/covid-19-survey>
 - b. Results will be available in the summer, 2020
- b. Crip Camp: The Official Virtual Experience

- a. Meeting Participant provided the link to Crip Camp which invites grassroots activists and advocates to join for a summer virtual camp
- b. <https://cripcamp.com/officialvirtualexperience/>
- c. Disability Alliance BC – Our Voice
- d. <https://myemail.constantcontact.com/The-latest-disability-news-.html?soid=1103447193504&aid=l8pwvtlrbNw>

Pathways To Independence Peer Group Meeting Notes and pertinent documents are uploaded to <https://www.ifrcsociety.org/pathways>

Thank you everyone, for your attendance and contribution to the meeting!