

Weekly Community Update

Week of March 27, 2020

Dear friends and neighbours of Haliburton County,

The global COVID-19 pandemic is an unprecedented moment in our lives, and it is impacting more of us each day.

During this challenging time, and as always, the health and safety of patients, residents, our team, and the Haliburton County community is the top priority at Haliburton Highlands Health Services (HHHS).

We are deeply grateful to the members of our team and everyone who supports them, as they have stepped up to the plate in so many ways, all while continuing to provide excellent care to clients, patients, and residents at our facilities.

Today, we want to share a series of important updates about the planning and management of the pandemic that is happening at HHHS. We intend to keep sharing updates like these on a weekly basis, and more frequently as required.

If you are feeling unwell

First, a reminder to anyone who thinks they may be experiencing symptoms of COVID-19. Please visit ontario.ca/coronavirus to take the online self-assessment and then, if directed, contact one of the following:

- Telehealth Ontario: 1-866-797-0000
- HKPR Health Unit: 1-866-888-4577 ext. 5020
- Your Primary Care Provider (Physician, Nurse Practitioner, etc.)

If you are having difficulty breathing or experiencing other severe symptoms, call 911 immediately. Advise them of your symptoms, and your travel and contact history.

Carefully managing staff, facility, and supplies

For the week ending March 27, 2020, HHHS has been primarily focused on plans to increase our staff and facility capacity to manage the anticipated demand from COVID-19.

When it comes to our staffing capacity, we are:

- Reviewing staff workloads and identifying opportunities for redeployment as well as areas that require additional support.
- Seeking any retired or relocated Health Care Workers not currently employed by HHHS who might be able to help. Anyone interested should contact Carl Carr, HR Manager, at hr@hhhs.ca or 705-457-1392 ext. 2254.
- Increasing recruiting for housekeeping and screening positions.

When it comes to facility capacity, we are:

- Working with the County of Haliburton and the Haliburton Family Medical Centre to establish a local COVID-19 Assessment Centre, which will be located in the parking lot of the Haliburton Family Medical Centre. The opening date and hours for the assessment centre will be shared as soon as they are available.
- Putting in place a bed and patient flow plan to ensure we are in the best position possible to care for all patients.
- Reconfiguring our Emergency Departments to create appropriate spacing for screening and distancing patients.
- Moving ultrasound services in Minden to the Family Health Team space.
- Working to expedite patients waiting for long-term care placement in order to open up more acute beds for COVID-19-related patients.
- Looking at various options to redesign our facilities to separate COVID-19 needs from non-COVID-19 needs, including expanding our acute care unit in Haliburton and exploring options to create an acute care space in Minden.

When it comes to supplies, we are:

- Starting to run low on personal protective equipment (PPE), although HHHS does currently have sufficient supplies on hand to manage existing demands.
- Actively working with our regional partners to ensure that the required supplies are in place to manage the anticipated increase in demand.
- Reaching out to the community at large and any other sectors or retailers that are not health service providers who may have a supply of PPE on hand.

Coordinating internally and with community partners

HHHS leadership and our excellent team are working hard to ensure there is a coordinated approach to the pandemic in our community. This includes:

- Keeping the HHHS Board of Directors active and engaged, although regularly-scheduled Board and Board Committee meetings have been put on hold so that HHHS can focus its energy on the current situation. The Board is convening as needed virtually through in camera meetings to address any urgent matters that require its approval.
- Continuing to hold virtual meetings of the Medical Advisory Committee
- Holding virtual meetings of three new committee to coordinate the HHHS and community response to the pandemic:
 - A HHHS COVID-19 Steering Committee conducts key planning, coordination, and decision-making for all aspects of the HHHS response, and meets daily,
 - A broader HHHS COVID-19 Task Force provides situational updates and operationalizes plans as directed by the Steering Committee, and meets daily Monday to Friday, and,
 - A COVID-19 Pandemic Planning Task Force conducts community response planning, includes community partners such as the Haliburton Family Medical Centre, all local Long-Term Care homes, Haliburton County Paramedic Service, the County of Haliburton, the HKPR District Health Unit, and representatives from the Community Care Access Centre and the Central East Local Health Integration Network, and meets at least twice weekly.

- Actively working with local service providers to ensure a coordination of resources to support vulnerable and at-risk community members at home.

Ensuring the safety of patients, residents, clients and staff

- Entrances to all HHHS facilities have been restricted to ensure proper active screening of entering the buildings including staff.
- Staff presenting with any symptoms are not permitted to work and have been asked to return/stay at home and self-isolate.
- Visitors have been restricted except in extenuating circumstances (for example, end-of-life) for all patients and residents.
- Additional activities have been added to LTC homes to ensure ongoing stimulation and social interaction during these restricted times. Technology such as Skype is being used to connect residents to family.
- A LTC Information line has been added for families to access to receive any updates or changes.

Turning to the community for help

This must be a team effort - at HHHS, across community partners, and with every member of the Haliburton County community. If we can minimize the spread of COVID-19 in our region, we will all benefit. To stay healthy, please follow the guidelines issued by public health officials including staying home and away from other people if you are feeling unwell, maintaining social (physical) distancing of six feet between people, washing hands frequently and thoroughly, and covering coughs and sneezes. It is important to stay calm and focused on taking care of yourself, and your family, friends, and neighbours.

Thank you for your unwavering support of our team and the healthcare professionals in our community.



Carolyn Plummer
President and CEO