

**Knowles Centre Response to COVID-19 for Staff**

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**What is Knowles Centre doing to plan for COVID-19?**

Knowles Centre Risk Management team, led by Dr. Michael Burdz, in communication with the Board of Directors, is working to address this issue as it may affect the clients, staff, and other stakeholders of Knowles Centre. Our actions are also informed by consultation with the Child Protection Branch and other CCCTC agencies (Marymound, New Directions, and Macdonald Youth Services).

Plans include prevention and containment, maintaining staffing, client care, and business continuity.

Staff are asked to address their concerns directly to their immediate supervisor. Your questions and comments are important; they will help us to ensure all contingencies are considered.

Knowles Centre will refer to the following sources of information for direction in its planning:

* + Province of Manitoba: <https://www.gov.mb.ca/health/coronavirus/index.html>
  + Government of Canada Public Health: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection.html>

Other sources of information considered trustworthy include:

* + US Centre for Diseases Control: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
  + World Health Organization: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

**Other agencies are shutting down or having their employees work from home. Why is Knowles Centre not shutting down or asking employees to work from home?**

We are aware that other organizations are making various decisions in response to COVID-19. At Knowles Centre, we must balance between our responsibility to provide 24-hour essential services care to many of our clients while also considering the interests of staff during this unprecedented time.

Knowles Centre is asking our staff to implement the many effective preventative measures (handwashing, social distancing, etc.) so that we can continue to make life as normal as possible for our clients and not contribute to any fear or panic.

As well, staff are asked not to enter Knowles Centre buildings or offices other than the facility where they normally work unless necessary.

The need for employees to work from home, if that is an option, will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Employees must speak with their immediate supervisor, who will consult with HR and the CEO in making a decision.

**Will I be paid if I have to self-isolate after travelling out of country?**

Staff who returned to Canada from out-of-country travel are required to self-isolate for 14 days from the date of their return. Staff who departed before the Province recommended this action on March 13 are eligible to take up to two weeks of paid sick leave, provided they have accumulated the time. Staff may also use vacation time or banked time. If staff have exhausted their sick time, they may apply for [Employment Insurance Sick Leave benefit](https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/corporate/notices/coronavirus.html). The Government of Canada has waived the one-week waiting period for this benefit.

Staff who departed on or after March 14 (when the Province first recommended self-isolation for out-of-country travelers) are not eligible to use their sick time to cover their period of self-isolation. They may still use vacation or banked time to cover their absence.

Staff are encouraged to use the COVID-19 Screening Tool if they are concerned they may be infected: <https://sharedhealthmb.ca/covid19/screening-tool/>

Staff may also visit the Canada Health website for more information on the difference between self-monitoring, self-isolation, and isolation with COVID-19: <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/phac-aspc/documents/services/publications/diseases-conditions/know-difference-self-monitoring-isolation-covid-19/know-difference-self-monitoring-isolation-covid-19-eng.pdf>

**What other times might I have to self-isolate?**

Staff will be expected to self-isolate if they have been in close contact with someone who has been diagnosed with or presumptively has COVID-19 even if they do not currently have symptoms. Close contact includes being within 6 feet of someone for more than 10 minutes. Staff may use their sick time, vacation time or banked time to cover their absence, or apply for Sick Leave Employment Insurance.

Staff are encouraged to use the COVID-19 Screening Tool if they are concerned they may be infected: <https://sharedhealthmb.ca/covid19/screening-tool/>

Staff may also visit the Canada Health website for more information on the difference between self-monitoring, self-isolation, and isolation with COVID-19: <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/phac-aspc/documents/services/publications/diseases-conditions/know-difference-self-monitoring-isolation-covid-19/know-difference-self-monitoring-isolation-covid-19-eng.pdf>

**What if I have to take care of my children once schools and daycares are closed?**

We encourage parents to arrange for alternative childcare options as soon as possible. Parents must not bring children to work.

If possible, work schedules may be adapted to assist parents to balance work and childcare arrangements. Please speak with your supervisor about any options that may be available within your program. If there are no alternatives, staff may use vacation or banked time to cover their absence.

Staff who are deemed to be essential workers (this includes staff in our Group Care Treatment and SAIL programs) may apply for emergency child care for their own family.

Staff who do not qualify for access to emergency child care services may apply to [Service Canada](https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/corporate/portfolio/service-canada.html) to apply for financial benefits if they must stay at home to care for children.

**How can I access emergency child care for my own family?**

If you need care for your own children (ages 12 and under) so that you can continue your essential work, you may apply for emergency child care (including care during days, evenings and weekends). Visit the Province of Manitoba site at <https://www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/infomanitobans/index.html>

Once on the site, click on the heading “Licensed Child Care Facilities and Child Care Programming to Support Essential Workers.” There will you find an [application form](https://forms.gov.mb.ca/GoMCovid19ESW/) to complete that will be used to help match you with child care services.

**How can we ensure our Group Care Treatment and SAIL programs can continue to operate?**

While the risk remains contained and remains low in Manitoba, Knowles Centre expects to operate at our regular staffing levels with limited changes to our operations.

Knowles Centre has also identified the key functions for which staff are required and we are planning to ensure that we can to meet minimum requirements in the event of a quarantine.

Staff are being asked to identify if they are capable of filling key positions in an emergency or in the absence of regular staff. Ideally, these staff will be at lower risk (younger, healthy with no pre-existing conditions, no small children at home who will need care, or no regular contact with vulnerable people).

Similarly, staff who are at higher risk will be encouraged to self-identify and may be reassigned duties or self-isolate at home if the risk of transmission becomes high.

Program staff are also planning for sufficient food, medicine and other necessary supplies should such emergency measures be required.

**What about other client care and contact?**

Staff should closely monitor clients in our Group Care and SAIL Independent Living programs for symptoms such as fever, coughing or trouble breathing , etc. Similarly, our foster parents will continue to care for children in our Treatment Foster Care Program. All caregivers must act appropriately if a client shows signs of illness as per the [Province of Manitoba COVID-19 Practice Guide](file:///\\knowlesadmin\Redirected%20Folders\mbritton\My%20Documents\COVID-19\Covid-19%20Practice%20Guide%20-%20Updated%20March%2020.pdf).

Clients in our Day Treatment and Sexual Abuse Treatment programs will continue to have access to their clinical therapists. Clients who are showing the above symptoms are asked to cancel their appointments or arrange to hold their session via the telephone. Clients and their family may also request telephone sessions even if they are not ill or showing any symptoms. Our therapists will discuss the privacy implications with clients at the start of a telephone session.

When seeing clients from any program in person, clinical therapists and case managers will implement preventative measures for the well-being of all. This includes:

* keeping a safe distance, meeting in a larger space, or meeting outdoors depending on the weather
* practicing handwashing or hand-sanitizing before and after the appointment
* zero personal contact and not sharing any items
* discussing the importance of safety measures for all

If a clinical therapist or case manager is unable to see clients, we will notify the clients and/or their caregivers as soon as possible.

**Might staff be redeployed or re-assigned to help cover other essential services at Knowles Centre?**

Yes, staff may be asked or directed to fulfil other essential duties during this situation. Any decision about this will be based on the best interests of the clients and the capability of the staff to perform alternate duties.

Knowles Centre has consulted with MGEU representatives regarding this possibility that staff (including non-union staff) may have to be re-assigned to other positions or programs to ensure the continuity of our programs in this extraordinary situation.

As noted above, staff are asked to identify themselves to their supervisor if they are capable of filling key positions in an emergency or in the absence of the regular staff.

**Who will take care of me?**

This is a difficult time for everyone. We encourage staff to take care of themselves by eating well, exercising, getting enough sleep, managing stress, and following their own health provider’s medical advice.

Staff who have coverage through Manitoba Blue Cross Employee Assistance Program (EAP) may access services by telephone, video conferencing and email counseling. Call 204-786-8880 or 1-800-590-5553 toll free for more information.

Knowles Centre’s Manulife extended health plan will continue to cover eligible employees, including expenses incurred if you contract COVID-19. Out-of-country coverage may not be available if you leave the country during the COVID-19 travel advisory.

If you have questions about your coverage, please contact Sandie Wagner in Human Resources at 204-339-1951 ext. 178 or swagner@knowlescentre.org.

**Do you have other questions?**

Please speak with you immediate supervisors. If your question may concern others as well, it can be added to this list.