

# WorkSafeBC Guidelines for Creating a Safe Work Environment

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## SETTLEMENT AND INTEGRATION SECTOR

DEVELOPED BY AMSSA & WORKSAFE BC



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*Please note that this information is being constantly updated and we will update this document accordingly. AMSSA has created this document to compliment existing documents created by WorkSafeBC which can be found on their website. WorkSafeBC has reviewed this document and employers will need to modify these guidelines to make them employer and site specific.*

*See also AMSSA's other [COVID-19 resources](#). For more information on supporting migrant workers during COVID-19, please visit the [Migrant Worker Hub](#).*

## Introduction

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The settlement and integration sector works with newcomers, including refugees, refugee claimants, immigrants, migrant workers, international students and naturalized citizens. Organizations providing settlement and integration services are often not-for-profit organizations and are funded by multiple funders including Federal and Provincial Departments. Examples of the services provided in the sector are settlement and re-settlement services, language instruction, employment programming, trauma counselling and housing supports.

The Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies (AMSSA) is the provincial umbrella organization for the sector. As the settlement and integration umbrella agency in BC, AMSSA supports the sector through professional development programming and knowledge mobilization, as well as through various committees, partnerships and working groups. With the input of AMSSA members, AMSSA in collaboration with WorkSafeBC has developed guidelines for creating a safe work environment for the settlement and integration sector in BC during the re-opening of the Province.

## Overview of Guidelines

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These guidelines are intended for organizations providing in-person settlement and integration services to all newcomers regardless of immigration status. Organizations may also benefit from reviewing other WorkSafeBC created guidelines related to in-person counselling, office space, child care and day camps.

Where applicable, organizations must also follow any guidance from the provincial health officer that would be applicable and relevant to their organization and the services being offered. Organizations will need to create their own policies regarding a safe work environment during COVID-19 and these guidelines have been created to assist organizations in the creation of their own guidelines and are not meant to substitute their organizational guidelines.

## Understanding the Risk

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### **(From the WorkSafeBC website)**

The virus that causes COVID-19 spreads in several ways, including through droplets when a person coughs or sneezes, and from touching a contaminated surface before touching the face. Higher risk situations require adequate protocols to address the risk.

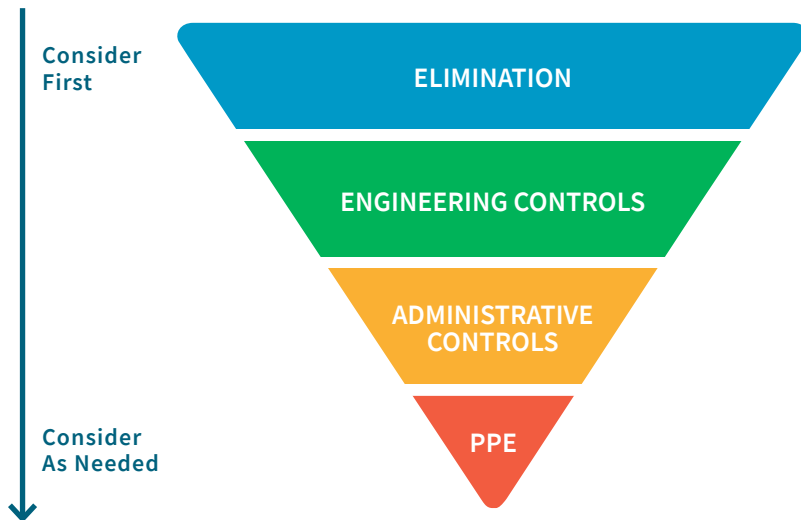
The risk of person-to-person transmission is increased the closer you come to other people, the amount of time you spend near them, and the number of people you come near. Physical distancing measures help mitigate this risk.

The risk of surface transmission is increased when many people contact the same surface, and when those contacts happen in short intervals of time. Effective cleaning and hygiene practices help mitigate this risk.

# Selecting Protocols for your Workplace

(From the WorkSafeBC website)

Note that different protocols offer different protection. Wherever possible, use the protocols that offer the highest level of protection and add additional protocols as required.



## FIRST LEVEL PROTECTION (ELIMINATION)

Limit the number of people in your workplace where possible by implementing work-from-home arrangements, establishing occupancy limits, rescheduling work tasks, or other means. Rearrange work spaces to ensure that workers are at least 2 m (6 ft) from co-workers, customers, and members of the public.

## SECOND LEVEL PROTECTION (ENGINEERING CONTROLS)

If you can't always maintain physical distancing, install **barriers** such as plexiglass to separate people.

## THIRD LEVEL PROTECTION (ADMINISTRATIVE CONTROLS)

Establish rules and guidelines, such as cleaning protocols, telling workers to not share tools, or implementing one-way doors or walkways.

## FOURTH LEVEL PROTECTION (PPE)

If the first three levels of protection aren't enough to control the risk, consider the use of **non-medical masks**. Be aware of the limitation of non-medical masks to protect the wearer from respiratory droplets. Ensure workers are **using masks appropriately**.

Note, that with COVID-19, most workplaces will likely need to use all 4 levels of protection, depending on the situation and conditions. Employers will need to develop policies and procedures to determine what protocols need to be used for various situations. First and foremost, always try to maintain 2 meters distance from others, and that barriers and mask are needed when that cannot be maintained consistently. The use of masks should never be used to increase capacity of a space when 2 meter distancing is possible.

# Vulnerabilities of Clients Accessing Settlement and Integration Services

Clients who access settlement and integration services are newcomers, including refugees, refugee claimants, immigrants, migrant workers, international students and naturalized citizens. The immigration pathway of a client and their length of time in Canada will influence the type of services required. Some clients who access services experience the following vulnerabilities which will influence the type of services that the client will access:

- Low language knowledge of English or French.
- Low-Literacy Levels.
- Financial barriers to accessing technology (internet and devices), hand sanitizer and non-medical face masks.
- Lack of an understanding of Canadian systems and culture.
- Violence or trauma survivors. They may suffer from PTSD or have other related mental/emotional symptoms/challenges.

## Tasks Performed by the Settlement and Integration Sector

### 1. GENERAL GUIDANCE APPLICABLE TO ALL TASKS

- Organizations will need to develop HR policies on how workers should access their own health and suitability to work and procedures that staff would need to follow if they are feeling ill.
- Organizations will also need to provide staff with information about sanitization options (handwashing stations, wipes or hand sanitizer) available at the workplace and who will be responsible for providing and restocking the sanitization options.
- Provide staff with training on Canadian COVID-19 guidelines and safe return to work guidelines.
- Communicate illness policy and safety protocols with clients through email, whatsapp, social media or website before entry into the organization in multiple languages. Consider recording a video in multiple languages to educate and inform clients about service delivery changes. Ensure that clients are aware that if they are feeling unwell or are displaying COVID-19 symptoms that the meeting will be held virtually or that the meeting will be rescheduled without any negative consequences for the client.
- Establish and post occupancy limits for shared spaces such as classrooms, office space, lunch rooms and break rooms. Consider removing chairs or tables to ensure occupancy limits are not exceeded. If possible, provide additional areas for workers to have their breaks, including outside areas if available.
- Stagger start and end of shift times as well as break times for workers to prevent crowding when entering and leaving the workplace.
- Have staff work remotely where possible. Hold meetings with staff virtually to minimize contact. When in-person meetings are necessary, position people at least two meters apart.
- Do not shake hands with clients and avoid close greetings like hugs.

## 2. CONDUCTING HEALTH ASSESSMENTS

- Staff must complete a health check prior starting work where they would enter into the workplace location or have in-person interaction with others including clients, colleagues or other stakeholders. The health check is required to ensure that they are healthy and not displaying any COVID-19 symptoms. This health check can be completed via questionnaire, email, phone or text 12-24 hours prior to the appointment.
- If staff display any symptoms, they will not be allowed to enter into any site locations or interact in person with any clients, colleagues or other stakeholders. Staff must remain at home, inform their employer and work from home as stated in the organization's HR policy.
- Any appointments that the staff member had scheduled will be rescheduled.
- Clients must complete a health check prior to any appointments to ensure that they are healthy and not displaying any COVID-19 symptoms. This health check can be completed via questionnaire, email, phone or text 12-24 hours prior to the appointment. This assessment can be done in the language of the client.
- If a client display symptoms, the appointment will be rescheduled.

## 3. FOOD OFFERED IN PROGRAMMING

- Avoid providing and consuming communal food.
- Consider providing bottled water instead of community water coolers or fountains.
- Provide pre-packaged snacks (granola bars, etc.) or boxed lunches when providing food is necessary.
- Provide a handwashing or hand sanitizing station prior to consumption of food.
- Provide individually wrapped utensils to clients.
- Reconfigure tables and chairs to allow for 2 meters distancing between parties.

## 4. ACCEPTING OF ITEM DONATIONS

- Organizations should avoid accepting item donations.
- If item donations need to be accepted, accept item donations that can be easily cleaned and avoid accepting items such as plush stuffed animals. Conduct a donation assessment when accepting donations to ensure that the items were not in a household where COVID-19 symptoms are present.
- Staff should use proper hand hygiene prior to disinfecting donations and afterwards.
- Donated items should only be distributed to clients once the items have been properly disinfected.

## 5. DELIVERING SUPPLIES TO CLIENTS AT HOME

- Discuss contactless delivery to maintain the physical distancing requirement (e.g., staff person leaves packages in a pre-arranged location) where possible.
- Provide staff with hand sanitizer to use.

## 6. CLIENT SERVICES AT THE CLIENTS' RESIDENCE

- Avoid home visitation. Conduct person to person meetings outdoor if possible.
- Review point #2 conducting health assessments.
- Provide clients a reminder of physical distancing and hand hygiene etiquette.
- Remind staff of hand hygiene requirements before and after the home visit.
- Discuss with clients the space where home visits will take place prior to the visit. Ensure that it is possible to conduct the home visit while remaining 2 meters apart. When possible and weather permitting, opt to conduct meetings outdoors.
- Provide hand sanitizer to workers that conduct home visits.
- Provide staff and clients conducting home visits with a non-medical face mask that should be worn at all times.

## 7. ACCOMPANIMENT & USE OF PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

- Review point #2 conducting health assessments.
- Provide hand sanitizer for staff and clients to use upon entry and exit from public transportation.
- Provide staff and clients using public transportation with a non-medical face mask that should be worn at all times.
- Appointments at peak periods should be avoided and travel should be undertaken during non-busy times to allow for maximized physical distancing.
- Maintain physical distance from other passengers when possible and follow Transit physical distancing markers where possible.
- Staff should maintain 2 meters physical distance to clients where possible.
- Use bus seating when possible. Allow extra time to arrive at the appointment. Take the next bus if the bus is too full.
- Walk to the appointment where possible. Or arrange to meet the client at a meeting point close to the appointment.
- For accompaniment visits to other agencies, try to complete the visit using virtual technology where possible.
- Staff should be knowledgeable about the COVID-19 guidelines of the organization/agency where the accompaniment visit will take place prior to the appointment.
- For appointments where the staff member is attending in the role of an interpreter, try to conduct interpretations virtually.

## 8. HOUSING SEARCH SUPPORTS

- Arrange to conduct virtual housing search appointments where possible.
- Review point #2 conducting health assessments.
- Provide hand sanitizer for staff and clients to use upon entry and exit from the housing unit.
- Provide staff and clients with a non-medical face mask that should be worn at all times during the viewing.
- Avoid touching common surfaces such as light switches or doors with your hands. If you touch an item, sanitize your hands.

- To help maintain the safety of clients and staff, staff in organizations should make their best attempt to refrain from showing multiple properties in a single day to help minimize cross-contamination.
- Do not shake hands with clients or other individuals and avoid close greetings like hugs.

## 9. LINC CLASSES, AND FIELD TRIPS, CONVERSATION CIRCLES

- Review point #2 conducting health assessments.
- Remind students to avoid close greetings like hugs or handshakes.
- Avoid group singing or cheering.
- Consider teaching classes outside when practical and weather permitting. Inform students that outside classes may be an option and for them to bring appropriate clothing.
- Students will have their own writing utensils, stationery and supplies. No sharing of supplies will be permitted in the classroom.
- Organize students into smaller groups that stay together throughout the day.
- Classroom maximum capacity limits to be posted inside the classrooms.
- Strive to minimize the number of different teachers that interact with students.
- Consider different classroom configurations to maintain 2 meter distance between students. If this is not possible, provide non-medical face masks for students.
- If it is not possible to maintain physical distancing of the instructor from students, consider the use of masks for instructors. If the usage of a mask hinders language learning for individuals with low language levels consider using a face shield for the instructor so that the client can see their mouth.
- Students will be asked to disinfect their work desks and arm chair surfaces prior to the start of the class and post class with agency-provided wipes.
- Traffic in and out of the classroom during classes will be restricted/limited.
- Students will consume snacks or drinks inside the classroom. The usage of the communal kitchens is not permitted for students as long as the COVID-19 procedure is in effect.
- Coffee or other beverages will not be available to students. Students are encouraged to bring their own beverages.
- Students will be encouraged to enter and exit the building before and after the class as efficiently and quickly as possible.
- Incorporate more individual activities or activities that encourage more space between students and staff.
- Develop policies around when students should wash their hands. Provide handwashing stations or hand sanitizer.
- Stagger start and end of class times as well as break times for students and staff to prevent crowding when entering and leaving the organization.
- If taking the students on field trips, clean and disinfect the high touch areas of the bus at the start and after drop offs. Maintain 2-meter distance on bus, or provide non-medical face masks.
- Try to conduct field trips virtually where possible.
- When possible and weather permitting, opt to conduct field trips that take place outdoors.
- Organize students into smaller groups when conducting field trips.
- If computers or other devices need to be shared, clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces such as the computer keyboard and mouse as well as desk surfaces.

## 10. GROUP WORKSHOPS/YOUTH PROGRAMMING

- Review point #2 conducting health assessments.
- For programs that support people in groups, consider creating smaller groups to support physical distancing. Keep the members of these groups consistent and minimize the number of different workers that interact with the same group.
- Ensure workshop participants use their own equipment (e.g., pens, paper, computers) where possible.
- Avoid group singing or cheering.
- Conduct workshops outside when possible.
- If computers or other devices need to be shared, clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces such as the computer keyboard and mouse as well as desk surfaces.
- Implement hand hygiene practices before and after breaks or workshops.
- When possible and weather permitting, opt to conduct youth programming that takes place outdoors.

### INFORMATION AND ORIENTATION APPOINTMENT (1:1)

Review point #2 conducting health assessments.

Remind clients to reschedule if they are ill. Consider virtual appointments as necessary.

Inform clients of the health and safety protocols in place prior to their appointment. (e.g. bring own pen, maintaining physical distancing, where to wait for appointment, stay home if you are sick).

Stagger start times and end times of appointments.

Minimize the shared use of workstations and equipment (pens, headsets, computers, etc) where possible and clean and disinfect in between uses for shared equipment.

Provide the client and staff person with their own writing utensils to prevent cross contamination.

Clients will be encouraged to enter and exit the building before and after their appointment as efficiently and quickly as possible.

Ask clients to attend appointments alone when possible. Only individuals whose participation in the appointment is necessary should be present.

Allow space between appointments to allow time for cleaning and sanitizing surfaces.

Staff should ensure that they are sanitizing all high touch services (e.g., door handles, light switches, desk) before and after a client attends an in-person appointment.

Staff should conduct hand hygiene practices between client meetings.

When possible and weather permitting, opt to conduct 1:1 meetings that take place outdoors.

Position staff and client such that a 2-meter distance can be maintained. If this is not possible, use a shield of plexiglass or similar material or provide masks for both staff and client.



## COMMUNITY KITCHENS

Review point #2 conducting health assessments.

Limit the number of clients and staff in a food preparation area at any one time.

Establish separations using plexiglass between workspaces in kitchens.

Consider creating cohorts of clients and staff who work together in the kitchen.

Establish directional arrows on the floor in kitchen settings to control flow of traffic.

As it is not possible to maintain physical distance at all times, clients and staff should use a mask.

Enhance cleaning and disinfecting practices for high-contact surface areas.

Ensure staff and clients are provided with a handwashing station or hand sanitizer.

Establish a cleaning protocol for communal equipment and kitchen tools.

Until further notice only disposable cups, towels and cutlery will be used in the kitchen. Only disposable towels will be made available.

## COMMUNITY GARDENS

Review point #2 conducting health assessments.

Enhance cleaning and disinfecting practices for high-contact surface areas.

Ensure staff and clients are provided with a handwashing station or hand sanitizer.

Establish a cleaning protocol for communal equipment and tools. Limit the number of individuals in the community garden at one time.

Consider creating cohorts of clients and staff who work together in the kitchen.

Establish directional arrows on the floor in the garden to control flow of traffic.

If it is not possible to maintain physical distance at all times, clients and staff should use a mask.

## 11. CHILDCARE, CHILDMINDING, AND PARENT/CHILD GROUPS

- Review point #2 conducting health assessments.
- Consider creating cohorts of workers who work together and who do not interact with other cohorts. This will assist in reducing transmission throughout the workplace in the event that a staff member becomes ill.
- Provide additional time for staff to complete disinfection of shared equipment (toys) prior to the next cohort of children arriving.
- General cleaning and disinfecting of the workplace should occur at least once a day.
- Frequently-touched surfaces should be cleaned and disinfected prior and after cohorts arrive.
- Childcare maximum capacity limits will be posted within the childminding area.
- Children will be expected to wash their hands at the designated handwashing prior to entry into the Childminding Center.
- Jackets, strollers and bags are to remain in designated areas outside of the Childminding Center.

- Children are to change their outside shoes to inside shoes. Outside shoes are to be left outside of the Childminding Center.
- Teachers will aim to ensure that children maintain social distancing between each other and the staff.
- Traffic in and out of the Childminding Center will be restricted/limited to children, parents and childminding staff. Other staff are only permitted in special circumstances.
- Parents will feed their children inside the Childminding Center.
- Parents and children will be encouraged to enter and exit the building before and after accessing childminding services as efficiently and quickly as possible.
- Hand sanitizer will be available in the Childminding center. Childminders will help sanitize children's hands constantly throughout the visit in the Childminding Center.
- Refer to [Child care and Day camps: protocols for returning to operation](#) for additional guidance.

## 12. CLIENT OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

- Review point #2 conducting health assessments.
- Staff should be knowledgeable about the COVID-19 guidelines of the organization/location where the client outreach activity will take place prior to the outreach activity being planned.
- Provide a reminder of physical distancing and hand hygiene requirements before, during and after the outreach activity.
- Discuss with staff and potential partners the space where client outreach activities will take place during the planning phase.
- Ensure that it is possible to conduct the outreach activity while remaining 2 meters apart. When possible and weather permitting, opt to conduct outreach activities outdoors.
- Provide hand sanitizer to workers that conduct outreach activities.

## 13. SUPPORTING GARS - WELCOMING NEWCOMERS AT YVR

- Review point #2 conducting health assessments.
- When welcoming newcomers at the airport who then need to enter quarantine, staff must take full precautions and use full PPE including masks, face shields, gloves and gowns.
- Staff must complete a health check prior to any shifts to ensure that they are healthy and not displaying any COVID-19 symptoms. If staff are sick or display COVID-19 symptoms, staff will be instructed to stay home and seek medical attention if needed.
- Counters that are used to provide clients with information, should have plexiglass or similar material installed to ensure client and staff protection. Signage should be placed on the floor to ensure physical distancing.
- When transporting newcomers to hotels for them to complete their quarantine, use transport buses where possible. Do not use public transit. Staff must wear a mask, gown, gloves and a face shield during the transport.
- Once clients have arrived at the hotel where they will be undertaking their 14 day quarantine, all services will be provided remotely using technology.

#### 14. WORK FROM HOME COMPLIANCE

- Employers are to provide staff who are working from home with information and checklists on what workers may need to consider for their home office.
- If an employee is to spend long periods of time of the computer the employer should send them the WorkSafeBC document “[How to make your computer station fit you](#)”.
- For further information read the [WorkSafe Health & Safety Responsibilities when Working from Home](#) document.