

Health Care Workers FAQ's

Last Updated: March 23, 2020

The following FAQs have been developed through the COVID-19 Joint Response Team and Health PEI Human Resources to help inform Health PEI staff and physicians as we respond to the virus.

*These FAQs may change over time. New versions will be sent to staff as requirements change and FAQs posted to Health PEI and Government websites will be updated frequently. **New/Updated answers will be bolded when distributed.***

If you have further Human Resource related questions that are not answered in this FAQ, you can email them to [COVID-19 Employee Information@ihis.org](mailto:COVID-19.Employee.Information@ihis.org).

You will not receive a direct response to your question; however, the response will be considered for updating future FAQs. You can also contact your HR Manager if you require a direct response. This information will be updated on a regular basis and can be found on the Staff Resource Centre.

1. Are there any cases of COVID-19 on PEI?

As of morning March 23, we have had 3 confirmed cases on Prince Edward Island.

2. What is being done to protect health care workers on the front lines?

PEI is following the PHAC (Public Health Agency of Canada) national guidance regarding screening, identification, infection control, testing and follow-up.

The health and safety of all health care workers is a priority for the COVID-19 Joint Response Team of the Chief Public Health Office and Health PEI, which is closely monitoring and responding to the issue.

Maintaining the health and wellbeing of health care workers is important for both those individuals and the ongoing health of Islanders.

Health care workers are being provided all the necessary personal protective equipment required to mitigate risk of being infected with COVID-19, including masks, gowns, gloves, and hand sanitizer. Precautions for COVID-19 are the same as for influenza.

The Joint Response Team's Supply Division is actively monitoring and adjusting supplies as necessary to ensure personal protective equipment is available where it is needed across the province.

Additionally, through the setup of external screening clinics in Charlottetown and Summerside, patients who need testing for COVID-19 are being diverted from acute care settings. Patients can access the screening clinics by calling 811.

3. Services within my department have been deemed non-essential at present. Will I be reassigned to alternate work or an alternate service/site?

If there is no work available in your current service area you may be reassigned to another service area at any time. Should there be no immediate work available in your service area you may be sent home with pay. However, you need to be ready to report to work when called upon, either to your regular service area or as a reassignment to another service area or role for which you are qualified.

4. What is self-isolation?

Self-isolation means avoiding situations where you could infect other people. This means all situations where you may come in contact with others, such as social gatherings, work, school, child care, athletic events, university, faith-based gatherings, healthcare facilities, grocery stores, restaurants, shopping malls, and all public gatherings.

You should, (where possible) not use public transportation including buses, taxis, or ride sharing.

As much as possible, you should limit your contact with people other than the family members/companions that you travelled with. You should avoid having visitors to your home, but it is okay for friends, family or delivery drivers to drop off food.

You can also use delivery or pick up services for errands such as grocery shopping.

Self-isolation can help prevent the spread of infections, such as novel coronavirus (COVID-19). When you are exposed to an illness, there is a time between the exposure and when you start to feel sick. This is known as the incubation period. There is a very small chance that you can spread the germs during this time, in the few days before a sickness starts. More importantly, staying home means that if you do start to feel sick, you won't run the risk of this happening while you

are in a public place. Self-isolation is a cautious action used to lower the chance that the virus could spread to others.

5. If I have travelled outside of Canada, will the Employer contact me with instructions?

Effective March 16, 2020, if you have travelled outside of Canada, your Manager/Supervisor will contact you to discuss your isolation period and possible options for telework if applicable.

6. If I have returned to Canada and am not experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 (asymptomatic), am I required to self-isolate?

Yes, anyone who has travelled outside of Canada is required to self-isolate for 14 days regardless of whether or not they are experiencing symptoms.

7. If someone living in my household has returned from out of country and are self-isolating, am I required to self-isolate as well?

If the person who has traveled and is self-isolating is not showing symptoms, those living with them can continue daily activities as normal and follow good hygiene practices.

If the person who travelled is a child who is dependent on you for care, you would need to self-isolate with the child as self-isolation at home is not likely to be possible.

If the return was before March 8, there is no need to self-isolate.

8. If someone in the same household of a health care worker has travelled and is symptomatic (develops symptoms), does the health care worker report for work?

If the person self-isolating is experiencing symptoms, everyone in the household should also self-isolate and monitor symptoms until tests are confirmed. Information on self-isolation at home can be found here: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/diseases-conditions/covid-19-how-to-isolate-at-home.html>)

If the health care worker develops symptoms at work, they should don a mask, practice hand hygiene, leave work immediately, and call 811.

9. I have tested negative for COVID-19 during my self-isolation period. Can I return to work?

Any health care worker who has been identified to self-isolate for 14 days but tests negative, is still required to continue self-isolation for 14 days and monitor for symptoms.

10. If health care workers are required to self-isolate, can we use sick time?

Should health care workers who are asymptomatic (not experiencing symptoms) be required to self-isolate, they will be placed on paid administrative leave, this includes casuals who had shifts that were pre-booked.

Some health care workers may have the option/ability to do telework from home. Please discuss this option with your Manager/Supervisor if applicable.

Should a health care worker develop any symptoms of COVID-19, such as fatigue, aches, fever, cough and difficulty breathing, they should call 811 for screening to determine whether a test is appropriate. Once symptomatic, paid administrative leave ends and standard sick leave begins as outlined in the respective collective agreement.

If a health care worker tests positive for COVID-19, they will be required to continue to self-isolate and follow medical advice. This may extend past the 14 day self-isolation period.

It is important to notify your Manager/Supervisor as to changes in your status.

For detailed information related to specific circumstances, please reach out to your Human Resource Manager.

11. What if I don't have sick time?

Health care workers who become symptomatic and are without adequate sick leave can take unpaid leave. While on unpaid leave, staff can access any vacation/stat/TIL banks to substitute for paid sick leave while they recover and self-isolate.

Health care workers without sick leave (including casuals) may be eligible for employment insurance benefits. Employment insurance benefits have been made easier to access by the federal government. You can find further information at [servicecanada.ca](https://www.servicecanada.ca).

For more detailed information, please contact your Human Resources Manager for guidance.

12. I have children who cannot attend early childhood centres or schools because they are closed. I have no child care to attend work. What do I do?

We recognize these closures present challenging circumstances to employees who have young children in school or daycare. We know we can count on you to do your best to balance your work and personal obligations and be present at work as much as possible.

1. Please attempt to make alternate childcare arrangements, even for part of the day or the week.
2. If you are unable to make alternate childcare arrangements, talk to your manager about possible options to work from home or to modify your work hours (shift changes, schedule changes, evenings and nights instead of days, etc...).
3. If employees are able to demonstrate to their manager that they pursued all reasonable options, they will be provided with special leave with pay for those work periods where they have no reasonable alternate child care arrangements until schools and daycares re-open.

Emergency Child Care Assistance may be available through the provincial government. You do need to apply for this program. Information and the application can be found here:

<https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/service/emergency-child-care-services>

This is an exceptional measure and will minimize financial losses for employees.

13. My manager has suggested telework may be an option for me. What does this mean?

On a restricted basis, while maintaining essential services Managers / Supervisors may consider “working from home” for some employees.

We recognize each employee situation could be unique so these requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis with consideration given to both the needs of the employee and operational requirements of the work site and services being delivered. Although not exhaustive, circumstances where the consideration for “working from home” could include:

- employee is required to self-isolate by potential exposure to COVID 19, but are still able to work and contribute;
- the employee cannot be redeployed to another work area but can contribute from home;
- or employee can work but there are no other means to keep them attached to the workplace (if service closes). Managers and supervisors should work with staff individually, collectively and collaboratively as a team to discuss what this means specifically for your program area and the work that you do. Managers/Supervisors must make it clear that working from home still requires productive / meaningful work to support the programs/ services; and it will be temporary.

It is important to remember that you may also be required to report to an alternate worksite or may be deployed on short notice. Work assignments could include counselling from home, education / training, closing files etc.

14. I have plans to leave the country, should I travel?

The Chief Public Health Office has advised against non-essential travel outside of Canada.

All out of province non-essential work related travel is being cancelled.

Employees who have travel plans outside of Canada that were booked prior to March 13, 2020 will be eligible for paid administrative leave for the 14 day self-isolation period upon their return to Canada. Should you become symptomatic you will be eligible for sick leave as outlined in your respective collective agreement. It is important to notify your Manager/Supervisor as to changes in your status.

Health care workers who become symptomatic and are without adequate sick leave can take unpaid leave. While on unpaid leave, staff can access any vacation/stat/TIL banks to substitute for paid sick leave while they recover and self-isolate.

Health care workers without sick leave (including casuals) may be eligible for employment insurance benefits. Employment insurance benefits have been made easier to access by the federal government. You can find further information at [servicecanada.ca](https://www.servicecanada.ca). Additional benefits may be accessed through programs announced by the Government of Canada and the PEI Provincial Government. Resource information can be found at [princeedwardisland.ca](https://www.princeedwardisland.ca) and [gc.ca](https://www.gc.ca).

For more detailed information, please contact your Human Resources Manager for guidance.

Employees who choose to travel outside of Canada following the March 13, 2020, travel restriction recommendations and the 14 day required self-isolation notification are not eligible for paid administrative leave during the 14 day self-isolation period. Should you become symptomatic you will be eligible for sick leave as outlined in your respective collective agreement

15. I have decided to cancel my vacation plans and not travel outside of Canada, can I cancel my approved vacation?

Employees are encouraged to speak to their Managers to determine if this is possible. Employees will be able to carry over vacation into the 2020 fiscal year (April 1, 2020 – March 31, 2021).

16. If I did not travel internationally but did travel out of province within Canada, am I required to self-isolate?

As of March 21, 2020, the Chief Public Health Office has instituted a 14-day self-isolation period for anyone who has travelled outside PEI, including within Canada. Those who return to the Island, including health care workers will be screened for symptoms.

However, we can confirm that health care workers are exempt for the 14-day isolation period and do not have to stay home as long as they have not had symptoms of COVID-19 and have not traveled outside of Canada.

This exception is to allow health care workers to continue to offer essential services to Islanders.

As health care workers, you are trusted to monitor your own symptoms to ensure your health and safety and that of your patients. Those who have returned from travel within Canada are asked to self-monitor for COVID-19 symptoms and leave work as soon as they start to feel unwell, including body aches, fatigue, cough, fever, or shortness of breath.

All staff should remember to practice social-distancing and avoid groups to help slow the spread of the virus in this province and to help ensure you stay healthy.

If you have any questions about this situation, please contact your HR Manager or email COVID-19 Employee Information@ihis.org

17. How will we know if the situation changes?

Updated information, including information for health care providers, will be posted regularly to the website princeedwardisland.ca/coronavirus. Information is also available by calling the Public Health at 1-800-958-6400.

Updates to this FAQ will be posted to the Health PEI Staff Resource Centre and can be found at <https://src.healthpei.ca/>. Hard copies will be posted on the OH&S bulletin boards in each work site for those without access to email.

Health PEI is also committed to sharing regular updates to all members of the organization through at least twice weekly reports from the Joint Operations Team. Additional reports will be distributed as required when significant changes occur. Managers are asked to post these updates for those without email.

Questions regarding benefits, leave, and work requirements should be directed to your Human Resources Manager.

18. Where can I find more resources?

The following resources are available for your reference:

1. [Prince Edward Island COVID-19 Novel Coronavirus Guidelines](#)
2. [Infection Prevention and Control for Coronavirus Disease \(COVID-19\): Interim Guidance for Acute Healthcare Settings](#)
3. [Routine Practices and Additional Precautions for Preventing the Transmission of Infection in Healthcare Settings](#)
4. [Interim guidance: Public health management of cases and contacts associated with novel coronavirus disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)
5. [COVID-19 National Surveillance Case Definition](#)
6. [PEI Government Novel Coronavirus Frequently Asked Questions](#)
7. [Public Health Guidance on COVID-19 for Schools \(K-12\) and Childcare Programs](#)
8. [Technical COVID-19 Disease Assumptions for clinicians and public health authorities](#)
9. [Community-based measures to mitigate the spread of coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\) in Canada](#)
10. [Risk-informed decision-making for mass gatherings during COVID-19 global outbreak](#)
11. [Febrile respiratory illness screening tool](#)
12. <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/diseases-conditions/covid-19-how-to-isolate-at-home.html>)
13. <https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/service/emergency-child-care-services>

As a reminder, you must report any suspect cases of COVID-19 to the CPHO as soon as observed. The [PEI COVID-19 Guideline](#) is an evergreen document and will be revised to reflect updates in recommendations. Health Care Providers can contact CPHO (Chief Public Health Office) at 902-368-4996 if you have any questions.

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