

# SGEU Health Providers COVID-19 Pandemic Update

March 31, 2020



Today your SGEU Health Providers Bargaining Committee would like to try to address some of the questions and concerns that we have received.

## **Cohorting /Working in more than one facility**

Currently there is no restriction from movement between facilities in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, if an outbreak occurs, the Cohorting Protocol will be put in place, and will restrict workers from working at more than one facility, to help prevent the spread of infection. There are currently no outbreaks at our facilities. We realize that many members work in multiple facilities including those with staff represented by other unions. The protocols are in place for all employees, regardless of facility or union.

## **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

The [COVID-19 page](#) on the Government of Saskatchewan website contains information for Health Care Providers, including a section about Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), although the issue of PPE shortage and usage is not addressed clearly. The directions given for use of PPE is substandard and unclear. We have received numerous calls and emails about the shortage and inaccessibility of masks and other PPE. Along with other unions, we have addressed this concern repeatedly in our daily calls with government and SHA officials.

Members have informed us that there is a shortage of masks, gloves and gowns; the SHA has assured us that more are on order. We have also been informed that PPE has been going missing. Therefore, the SHA has put additional monitoring and distribution policies in place for these items.

We urge you to be extremely careful with your use of PPE. These PPE items are vital to the workplace. Proper use of PPE is very important. Use PPE when it is required but do not use it if there is no need. We need to ensure our members as well as the people we are caring for are safe. We continue to demand that workers be kept protected. If you are experiencing a shortage of PPE or lack of instructions about when and how to use PPE, please contact us.

## **Process changes for MRSA and VRE**

MRSA and VRE screening and additional precautions have been temporarily suspended. Effective immediately, all acute and Long Term Care (LTC) facilities in the province are to suspend SCREENING and ISOLATION for patients colonized with MRSA and VRE (does not apply to CPO), other than for high risk areas/patients (e.g. ICU, transplant, oncology). Please note that ALL patients/residents with evidence of CLINICAL INFECTION with MRSA or VRE should still be placed on Contact and/or Droplet Precautions as per existing local protocols.

The SHA is confident that with the heightened awareness of infection control and proper hand hygiene protocols in place right now, the risk of infection will not increase due to the suspension of these additional protocols. We continue to keep our finger on this pulse; please share your questions, concerns and comments with your managers as well as your Union.

### **Child Care Needs**

We continue to receive calls and emails about the denial of Family Leave requests for child care needs. If you are unable to find child care and are denied Family Leave or other leaves, please contact us so we are able to work with you and the employer on a solution.

### **Staff Screening**

The SHA is working on a process involving COVID-19 screening for LTC staff. This will be coming sooner rather than later. We will provide this information when it becomes available.

### **Re-deployment of Staff**

Talks and negotiations continue regarding the movement of staff and creating labour pools. We realize that we are in a state of emergency and we want to continue caring for the public in a safe and responsible manner. The safety of our members is paramount, which includes proper training and orientation into other worksites and the provision of appropriate PPE. In our discussions with the employer, we have made it clear that we have negotiated collective agreement rights and any variances of such collective bargaining language must be agreed upon by the SGEU Health Provider Bargaining Committee prior to implementation.

### **Staff returning from Out-of-Province not required to self isolate**

Your Union has repeatedly raised your concerns regarding this situation. The SHA is following government protocols which can be found in the COVID-19 information section on the Government of Saskatchewan website under [Public Health Measures](#).

If you continue to have questions regarding this issue, we have been advised that you should take the following actions: 1) Speak with your manager. 2) Raise the issue with your Union, so we can continue to bring these issues to the attention of labour relations, which we have been doing. We also ask that you email your questions and concerns to the government using the [online link](#) for COVID-19 questions on the Saskatchewan.ca website or call 1-855-559-5502 for non-medical questions.

### **COVID-19 Questions**

If you have questions or require more information regarding COVID-19, please check the [Saskatchewan.ca website](#) for the most up-to-date specifics and help, including a COVID-19 self-monitoring tool from the provincial government.

Please call 811 only if you have symptoms of COVID-19. In an emergency or if you are in medical distress, call 911. For all non-medical questions, call 1-855-559-5502.

## **Communication**

Your SGEU Health Providers Bargaining Committee will continue to communicate with you as often as possible. Please share this information with your colleagues. If you or your coworkers are not receiving communications from us, please download our [SGEU Health Sector App](#). We also encourage you to visit the SGEU website [www.sgeu.org](http://www.sgeu.org) and follow the quick links drop down to [update your contact information](#) for our member database. Over the next few weeks, you may also be receiving a call from SGEU to verify your contact information for our records, to help ensure we have a quick, reliable and easy way to contact you with updates and important information from the union.

If you have Union-related questions please contact Tracey Sauer at [tsauer@sgeu.org](mailto:tsauer@sgeu.org) or Diane Ralph at [dralph@sgeu.org](mailto:dralph@sgeu.org). We will answer your questions or refer you to the appropriate resource.

In closing, we know there is a lot of concern, anxiety and fear out there. We worry about our families; we worry about our patients, clients and residents; and we worry about ourselves. Remember to reach out to one another, talk with one another, share your concerns. You are not alone.

## **Accessing your EFAP**

As SGEU Health Providers, you have access to your Employee Family Assistance Program (EFAP). You can find confidential and convenient support for anxiety, communication skills for managing relationships and day-to-day parenting of school-aged children with Online Group Counselling through your EFAP.

For immediate assistance, contact 1.844.880.9142. Morneau Shepell's EFAP online information can be found at [www.workhealthlife.com](http://www.workhealthlife.com). We encourage you to check out the *Employee-facing* COVID-19 content as it becomes available. This is where you will find information on the virus itself, tips for the caregiver, and other valuable resources as this pandemic progresses.

#staysafe #flattenthecurve

In Solidarity,

## **SGEU Health Providers Bargaining Committee**

**Tracey Sauer, Chair**

**Diane Ralph, Vice-Chair**

**Jolean Brochu, Member, KTHR**

**Ryan Favel, Member, KYRHA**

**Wendy McPhail, Member, MCRRHA**

**Danny Hind and Kim Nordmarken, Labour Relations Officers**