

March 30, 2020

AR 169685

Re: Exemptions and Clarifications for Operators of Licensed Residential Addiction Treatment Service Facilities, related to Chief Medical Officer of Health Orders

On March 16, 2020, in my capacity as Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH), I declared a state of public health emergency in Alberta, due to the presence of COVID-19 in the province. The Government of Alberta recognizes that operators of residential addiction treatment services licensed under Section 6 of the *Mental Health Services Protection Act* provide an essential service in Alberta, particularly during this time of emergency. I am pleased to provide the following exemptions and clarifications related to my recent Orders.

Mass gathering restrictions

On March 25, 2020, in Appendix A under CMOH Order 06-2020, I required that group and recreational activities in long-term care, supportive living and residential addiction treatment facilities be limited to five or fewer residents.

- I am allowing an exception to this requirement in licensed residential addiction treatment facilities: therapeutic group activities may proceed with up to eight residents. This exemption applies only to residents who do not have symptoms of COVID-19 and who are not in isolation.
- CMOH Order 06-2020 can be found at <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/cmoh-order-06-2020-2020-covid-19-response>.

On March 27, 2020, under CMOH Order 07-2020, Clause 3, I announced that indoor gatherings of more than 15 people are prohibited and that any people gathering in an indoor location must maintain a minimum of 2 metres distance from one another. Clause 5 confirms that these gatherings include any type of public or private gathering, including but not limited to, weddings, funerals, religious services, informal events etc.

- To clarify, this prohibition does not apply to the the normal operations of residential addiction treatment facilities. Normal operations of essential services that include more than 15 people may proceed, but risk mitigation strategies such as physical distancing must be in place.
- CMOH Order 07-2020 is available at <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/cmoh-order-07-2020-2020-covid-19-response>.

Physical distancing in residential addiction treatment facilities

Also under CMOH Order 07-2020, I have required that people who gather in an indoor or outdoor setting must maintain a minimum of 2 metres distance from one another.

- I am providing the following exemption for communal sleeping quarters occupied by residents of residential addiction treatment facilities: the minimum requirement for placement of beds is 1 metre apart, and beds must be arranged so that residents sleep with maximum distance between their heads, depending on bed arrangement this could be toe to toe or head to toe rather than head to head.
- Operators must continue to facilitate 2 metres of physical distance between clients during normal daytime operations. I will allow a limited exemption to this requirement in the event that a 2 metre physical distance inhibits treatment activities (e.g., during group therapy sessions). In such circumstances, the configuration of residents and staff must allow for a minimum of 1 metre of physical distance between people.

Symptomatic residents, staff and volunteers

On March 25, 2020, under CMOH Order 05-2020, I required that any person who is exhibiting any of the following symptoms: cough, fever, shortness of breath, runny nose or sore throat, which are not related to a pre-existing illness or health condition, must be in isolation for a minimum of 10 days from the start of their symptoms, or until the symptoms resolve, whichever is longer.

- Staff and volunteers at residential addiction treatment facilities must follow this requirement and must stay home if exhibiting any of the above-listed symptoms.
- Residents who have symptoms of COVID-19 or who are a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 must be placed in isolation and cannot sleep communally. If multiple residents have symptoms of COVID-19 and have been isolated together, the operator must follow the requirement, under CMOH 07-2020, to ensure 2 meters of distance between people, including within sleeping arrangements.
- CMOH Order 05-2020 can be found at <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/cmoh-order-05-2020-2020-covid-19-response>.

Admission of new clients at residential addiction treatment facilities

Residential addiction treatment facilities are encouraged to continue to admit new clients during this time, as long as those clients do not exhibit symptoms of COVID-19. Operators must conduct the health assessment screening protocol on pages 4-5 of Appendix A, under CMOH 06-2020, including temperature screening and completing the COVID-19 questionnaire. If a prospective client fails the health assessment screen, they can only be admitted if the facility is able to provide them with support in isolation.

Yours sincerely,



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