

## All-Staff Update

Hello,

I am Jane Curtis, CEO of Southern Health-Santé Sud. This is the regional all-staff update for September 2, 2020.

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As many families prepare for an unprecedented return to school transition, health care workers in Manitoba are also facing new challenges, responding to ongoing new protocols in the midst of a rise in new COVID-19 cases across the province.

The current situation in Manitoba maintains that COVID-19 is still with us, with new cases climbing to new levels. Effective Thursday, Manitoba will reintroduce restrictions on travel to the north. New restrictions have also been implemented just west of us in the Prairie Mountain Health region as they manage COVID-19 outbreaks in four of their health care facilities.

A heightened level of caution is also in effect in Southern Health-Santé Sud related to various community outbreaks including the personal care home in Steinbach. First and foremost, I want to recognize that every extra shift, every worry, and every loss we encountered at Bethesda Place is heartfelt among us across the region. I want to thank the staff at Bethesda Place and the Bethesda Regional Health Centre for their selfless contributions and dedicated commitment in supporting co-workers and residents during this difficult time. The leadership has been second to none.

In response to our request for assistance, several staff from around the region have offered to re-deploy to support the Steinbach facilities. We recognize that for many of these staff, they are accepting to redeploy to an environment where they never worked before. We are grateful and thank you for lending a much-needed helping hand. Having said that, we are once again calling out to for more help. More support is urgently needed. If you feel able to respond to this request for assistance, please talk to your manager.

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Regarding this situation and in various emerging clusters, together we continue to work with Manitoba Health, Seniors and Active Living and Shared Health to do everything to protect the health of staff, patients, and the community. All hands are on deck.

Here are some of the latest updates on the COVID-19 response:

### *Mandatory Masks*

- All health care facilities in Manitoba now require all visitors to wear non-medical masks for the duration of their visits. This requirement applies to all who visit health care facilities, including designated support persons, general visitors, and outpatients attending medical appointments.
- Exceptions include children under the age of five and individuals with medical conditions unrelated to COVID-19, including breathing or cognitive difficulties that prevent them from safely wearing a mask.
- Persons who are unable to put on or remove their mask without assistance are also exempted.
- Patients seeking care at emergency departments, urgent care centres and/or clinics will be encouraged to wear non-medical masks, but will continue to be provided with a procedure mask, if appropriate, when screened prior to entry.
- Staff are also strongly encouraged to bring and wear their own non-medical masks for use when passing through health-care facilities, like in hallways and other areas where patients may be present – even if physical distance can be maintained.
- This recommendation for staff **does not** replace the need for appropriate use of facility-provided Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

### *PPE*

- Every day, in all health care settings and situations, health care workers rely on basic infection prevention and control measure to prevent the spread of infection from patient to patient, from patient to staff, from staff to patient, and from staff to staff.
- Our ability to sustain vital services to the community is dependent on the wellbeing of all health care workers.
- As health care workers, it is imperative that we take the appropriate and available actions for using PPE to protect each other, our patients, and the community from exposure to, and transmission of, COVID-19.
- This ongoing vigilance is expected in the care of all patients and in every health care setting in addition to practicing the fundamentals of hand hygiene, physical distancing, and staying home when you are ill.
- I cannot stress this enough – please stay home when you are ill.

### *Staff Support*

- Increasingly, many of us are experiencing feelings of fear, anxiety, and stress under the pressure of increased workforce demands, message fatigue, and rising case numbers.
- We want to encourage you to reach out if you need support...
- The Wellness Support Line is a confidential phone number you can call. Mental health clinicians are ready to listen and support you during this difficult time.

- I also want to remind you that we also have our Employee Assistance Program that is always available for employees.
- Visit [www.southernhealth.ca](http://www.southernhealth.ca) where you will find a link on the home page providing access to various mental health supports.

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As my message concludes, I want to once again say 'thank you'. Regardless of the geography you live in, you have shown some of your best qualities by working together, helping those in need and making sure we are ready to take on the challenges ahead of us.

More than ever, we need to pull together, to work together, and to collectively remain strong together for the health and wellbeing of the people in our communities – and each other ... so that together we can enjoy a healthier tomorrow.

**Thank You!**