**Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs): Reopening Programs and COVID-19**

**Territorial Social Services Department**

### October 19, 2020 \*\*\*Revisions and new additions will appear in RED\*\*\*

# Preamble

This FAQ document is provided to support MUs in the reopening of non-residential services after closures related to COVID-19 while promoting health and safety for staff, volunteers and program participants. The information must be seen and applied through the lens of the values of The Salvation Army, especially that of dignity. Challenges created by the COVID-19 virus and the necessary changes in service delivery methods themselves may create heightened anxiety levels. Living out the values of The Salvation Army is vital in all interactions with program participants and with each other.

**Hope:** We give hope through the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

**Service:** We reach out to support others without discrimination.

**Dignity:** We respect and value each other, recognizing everyone’s worth.

**Stewardship:** We responsibly manage the resources entrusted to us.

# Table of Contents

# *To view the full document, scroll down or hover and Ctrl+Click to follow the link.*

[The Basics 4](#_Toc40874023)

[Where can we get up-to-date information regarding COVID-19? 4](#_Toc40874024)

[Health Canada Updates: Coronavirus disease (COVID-19): Outbreak update 4](#_Toc40874025)

[Is there more guidance locally or specific to our program? 4](#_Toc40874026)

[Reopening 5](#_Toc40874027)

[When should we reopen? 5](#_Toc40874028)

[How many program participants can we have on site once we reopen? 5](#_Toc40874029)

[How should we handle a new intake/registration once we reopen? 5](#_Toc40874030)

[Should greeting be changed? 5](#_Toc40874031)

[Are there additional guidelines specific to the reopening of childcare programs/facilities? 6](#_Toc40874032)

[Prevention Measures 6](#_Toc40874033)

[How do we continue to lower the risk of exposure for our program participants? 6](#_Toc40874034)

[Are there any suggestions in terms of cleaning and disinfecting the program space? 7](#_Toc40874035)

[What role can staff and clients play in preventing the spread of COVID-19? 7](#_Toc40874036)

[How can we perform screening? 7](#_Toc40874037)

[Should staff continue to self-monitor? 8](#_Toc40874038)

[What do we need to know about testing for COVID-19? 8](#_Toc40874039)

[What if a staff member or client is showing symptoms? 8](#_Toc40874040)

[What do we do if a staff member, volunteer or program participant has a confirmed case of COVID-19?.....9](#_Toc40874041)

[When can we stop the additional safety measures put in place? 9](#_Toc40874042)

[Other considerations 9](#_Toc40874043)

[Are there health and safety considerations to be made when reopening after a prolonged closure? 9](#_Toc40874044)

[How do we handle a potential high volume of client inquiries upon reopening? 10](#_Toc40874045)

[These extra measures put pressure on our budget. What should we do? 10](#_Toc40874046)

[I have questions related to staffing as my program reopens. Who should I contact? 10](#_Toc40874047)

[I have questions that aren’t answered here. Who should I contact? 10](#_Toc40874048)

[Sources Consulted & Additional Resources 11](#_Toc40874049)

# The Basics

### Where can we get up-to-date information regarding COVID-19?

Divisional Headquarters will need to approve reopening plans. Be sure to be in contact with them prior to reopening your program. Please visit [salvationist.ca](https://salvationist.ca/covid19/) for current and up-to-date information regarding The Salvation Army’s response to COVID-19.

Please visit the Public Health Agency of Canada website for up-to-date instructions on keeping our communities healthy.

### Health Canada Updates: [Coronavirus disease (COVID-19): Outbreak update](https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection.html?&utm_campaign=gc-hc-sc-coronavirus2021-ao-2021-0005-10020125402&utm_medium=search&utm_source=google-ads-107800103024&utm_content=text-en-434525470059&utm_term=%2Bcovid%20%2B19%20%2Bcanada)

The Government of Canada has more recently created **a tool which provides summary COVID-19 data** **about trends in your area**. You can use it to search by municipality, here: [https://health-infobase.canada.ca/covid-19/covidtrends/?HR=1,3551&mapOpen=true](https://can01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fhealth-infobase.canada.ca%2Fcovid-19%2Fcovidtrends%2F%3FHR%3D1%2C3551%26mapOpen%3Dtrue&data=02%7C01%7C%7Cc687b7a007564022339508d86fa143d8%7C6d08a372d98a49f380efca826293a473%7C0%7C0%7C637382085699509287&sdata=h9d52G%2FZIWlop7t0PW6i6LjWX%2BRA2yJxWgtuTwOgioA%3D&reserved=0)

Additionally,Canada’s **free notification app** for tracking exposure can be downloaded to your phone here: [https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19/covid-alert.html](https://can01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.canada.ca%2Fen%2Fpublic-health%2Fservices%2Fdiseases%2Fcoronavirus-disease-covid-19%2Fcovid-alert.html&data=02%7C01%7C%7Cc687b7a007564022339508d86fa143d8%7C6d08a372d98a49f380efca826293a473%7C0%7C0%7C637382085699509287&sdata=b1lnyiq3r5SKw88g2GMUeiccedwmgFTpxuJh65OAMfA%3D&reserved=0)

**Public Health Authority Contact Information by Province:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Phone number**  | **Website** |
| **British Columbia** | 811 | [BC Public Health Updates](https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/health-feature/coronavirus-disease-covid-19) |
| **Alberta** | 811 | [Alberta COVID-19 Updates](https://www.alberta.ca/coronavirus-info-for-albertans.aspx) |
| **Saskatchewan** | 811 | [Saskatchewan COVID-19 Updates](https://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/health-care-administration-and-provider-resources/treatment-procedures-and-guidelines/emerging-public-health-issues/2019-novel-coronavirus) |
| **Manitoba** | 1-888-315-9257  | [Manitoba COVID-19 Updates](https://www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/index.html) |
| **Ontario** | 1-866-797-0000 | [Ontario COVID-19 Updates](https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/diseases-and-conditions/infectious-diseases/respiratory-diseases/novel-coronavirus)  |
| **Quebec** | 811 | [La maladieà COVID-19 au Québec](https://www.quebec.ca/sante/problemes-de-sante/a-z/coronavirus-2019/) |
| **New Brunswick** | 811 | [New Brunswick COVID-19 Updates](https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/ocmoh/cdc/content/respiratory_diseases/coronavirus.html) |
| **Nova Scotia** | 811 | [Nova Scotia COVID-19 Updates](https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/) |
| **Prince Edward Island** | 811 | [PEI COVID-19 Updates](https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/topic/renew-pei-together) |
| **Newfoundland and Labrador** | 811 or 1-888-709-2929 | [NL COVID-19 Updates](https://www.gov.nl.ca/covid-19/) |
| **Nunavut** | 867-975-5772 | [Nunavut Public Health Updates](https://www.gov.nu.ca/health/information/nunavuts-path) |
| **Northwest Territories** | 811 | [NW Territories Public Health Updates](https://www.gov.nt.ca/covid-19/) |
| **Yukon** | 811 | [Yukon Public Health Updates](https://yukon.ca/covid-19) |
| **Bermuda** | (441) 278-4900 | [Bermuda COVID-19 Update](https://www.gov.bm/coronavirus) |

### Is there more guidance locally or specific to our program?

Check with your local public health, community partners and social-service committees in which you participate. They may have guidance or best-practice suggestions that are applicable to your local setting. It will be critical to attend these meetings or connect through email and telephone to ensure services are coordinated. Where applicable, review your operating agreements/contracts and connect with your funders for their latest guidance.

# Reopening

### When should we reopen?

Each province is developing a plan for reopening in phases, so this will be different depending on where your program is located. In some cases requirements may differ by public health jurisdiction or region and municipality. Connect with your Division, Area Commander, and local public health authorities to be sure that you plan to reopen in the correct phase of your provincial plan and that you can reopen safely meeting specific requirements/restrictions. Your DHQ must also be involved with and approve the plan to reopen.

It’s important to proceed with caution and use a careful approach considerate of the risks specific to your program type when planning for reopening. You will need to revisit your plan if there is any local COVID-19 activity and/or if direction is given from local or provincial authority. Some experts project the pandemic may extend into 2022, so planning and preparation is still prudent. Existing pandemic plans should be updated, as needed.

### How many program participants can we have on site once we reopen?

Check with your provincial and local public health guidelines. Restrictions on the number of individuals that can gather at one time and what types of activities are permitted will remain in place through several stages of provincial and regional reopening plans. Depending on the size of your program and protocols that must be followed (health and safety, etc.), you may not be able to reopen at full capacity immediately. At first, consideration may be given to inviting program participants back to the program on a rotating basis, if possible. For drop-in programs, an appointment system may be implemented to ensure physical distancing. Be sure to consider staff in the total number of individuals in your space. Add plexiglass barriers in areas that do not allow for social distancing following public health guidelines.

Program space will be a factor in determining the number of program participants, in addition to provincial and/or local allowances for group gatherings. Consider the number of people the province will allow to gather at once, compare it to the number of people you can safely host in your program space, and choose the lowest number of the two when reopening your services. Funders must be consulted if adjusting service levels/models.

### How should we handle a new intake/registration once we reopen?

When a new request for intake comes in, each program must assess their capacity under the current community/provincial guidelines. Where existing program participants are already attending on a rotating basis, new intake requests may need to be put on a waiting list.

If there is space in the program, intake/screening conversations should happen over the phone wherever possible. In the event that intake discussions must occur in person, be sure to adhere to physical distancing guidelines and any other health and safety requirements (plexiglass, PPE, screening, hand sanitizing, disinfection, etc.). Program fees may be collected using a drop box, by mail or through electronic means. Consult with funders to keep updated on service changes and expectations.

### Should greeting be changed?

We can greet one another with smiles and waves instead of handshakes. Assign a greeter or someone to hand out masks, wipes and sanitizer to all individuals at the first point of contact. Ensure proper PPE is worn and physical distance is maintained for this function by placing materials to be distributed on a table at every entrance and exit for individuals to pick up.

There can also be consideration given to staggering arrival and departure times to avoid large groups congregating at the entrance. If multiple pickups or drop offs are occurring at the same time (as in adult day programs and childcare settings), marks can be made on the floor to indicate proper physical distancing while waiting. It will be helpful to encourage family members to have one designated family member to do all drop offs and pickups where required.

### Are there additional guidelines specific to the reopening of childcare programs/facilities?

Yes. Local public health authorities will have provincially mandated directives for childcare that are applicable to your local setting. It will be critical to review and implement those guidelines and/or connect with your public health authority to ensure local procedures are being followed. An operating plan is to be developed prior to reopening to ensure compliance with all requirements. Where applicable, review your operating agreements and connect with your funders and public health authority for their latest guidance.

# Prevention Measures

### How do we continue to lower the risk of exposure for our program participants?

Program participants and their families should continue to monitor themselves for any symptoms or high-risk potential exposure (such as a family member in the household with COVID-19) and stay away from the program if necessary. Each person who enters the building is required to wash or sanitize their hands at the times of drop off and pick up.

Physical distancing measures are required throughout different phases of provincial and local reopening plans. This can be challenging when running group programs. It will be helpful to assess your program space for how many individuals can safely be in the space at once as well as considering provincial or local guidelines for group gatherings. When organizing activities during the day, ensure that they comply with all guidelines and allow for physical distancing and other safety measures. These safety measures are to be based on a risk assessment, and may include:

* Communicating clearly with the group of program participants what changes they will experience and any additional safety measures that might be expected of them.
* Developing staff and client schedules to ensure that the same group of staff is working with the same group of clients on a rotating basis. Mixing between groups should not occur.
* Ensuring participants remain 6 feet/2 meters apart during mealtimes and avoid sharing food.
* Considering the additional measures put in place at the destination as well as how the group will travel safely when planning an outing (when and if permitted).
* Working to ensure safety of drivers and passengers if transportation to and from the program is provided ([sample](https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/8d19-COVID-19-Guidance-for-Taxi-Ride-Share-Employers-Drivers-Vehicle-Owners.pdf)).
* Placing all seating, desks and tables 6 feet/2 meters apart in program areas.
* Limiting access to your building to essential visitors only during program times. There is also opportunity to restrict use of the building to certain spaces.
* Restricting point of entry and exit to one doorway and elevator.
* Temporarily removing program equipment that is difficult to disinfect, such as plush toys or books. Use of handouts should also be limited wherever possible.
* If the space has water fountains for participant use, having water bottles or cups as an alternative.
* Dedicate an isolation zone or room in the building should a client, volunteer or staff member demonstrate COVID-19 symptoms.

### Are there any suggestions in terms of cleaning and disinfecting the program space?

* Ensure the facility undergoes a deep clean and disinfecting process prior to reopening as well as between each new group of participants and staff. Disinfectants used are to be those recommended by provincial guidelines.
* Place multiple hand sanitizers in key locations and have posters to encourage use by staff and clients. Ensure staff use verbal reminders or posters with visual aids if the population served by the program is not best served by written posters.
* Ensure there is ample personal protective equipment and supplies available (e.g. gloves, masks, cleaning supplies, etc.). A risk assessment is to be conducted to inform PPE needs.
* Review your housekeeping practices and schedule more regular cleaning of high-traffic areas and frequently touched surfaces such as door handles, handrails, accessibility buttons. Keep a log of all cleaning practices and follow provincial guidelines.
* Review your program space and consider if some items need to be temporarily removed to limit the spread of germs. Ensure additional cleaning and disinfecting of any shared program equipment. Remove items that cannot be easily wiped down and disinfected (e.g. plush toys, fabrics, etc.)
* Ensure staff have been provided with training on PPE and disinfecting protocols prior to opening. Retain all training documentation for staff.

### What role can staff and clients play in preventing the spread of COVID-19?

Staff and clients are encouraged to maintain good hand hygiene throughout the day. Regular handwashing is vital, and the availability of hand sanitizer for use by clients and staff is also recommended. Program participants are to be assisted with this as necessary.

Posters can be used to encourage hand washing ([sample](https://salvationist.ca/files/salvationarmy/Magazines/2020/March/stop_covid_19_salvation_army_resource.pdf)) as well as physical distancing and coughing etiquette ([sample](https://salvationist.ca/files/salvationarmy/Magazines/2020/March/staying_healthy_covid_19_salvation_army_resource.pdf)).

Proper use of PPE (gloves, masks) is encouraged based on risk of exposure. Be sure that your ministry unit has an adequate supply of these materials when reopening the program. Connect with your Divisional Employee Relations representative with any questions and consult with THQ Health and Safety as required.

### How can we perform screening?

Screening can be one prevention method a program may use. Please consult with the local public health authorities and follow their suggestions relative to the process that can be used. Divisional Employee Relations staff are to be consulted with any questions about screening staff. Some considerations for screening practices:

* Is there a safe space to perform screening away from program participants or can screening take place outside?
* Are the employees trained to provide the screening process? Ensure there is a point person to answer questions available at times of screening.
* Are the employees remaining calm and supportive during the screening process? We will need to be careful not to convey judgement and to protect the dignity of each person who presents for help.
* Are privacy and confidentiality issues being reviewed?
* Can the screening process be done discreetly?
* Has a process been established for the facility and staff in the event that a client is demonstrating symptoms and needs to be isolated?
* Is there a policy and procedure in place if a person is unable to follow instructions?

### Should staff continue to self-monitor?

Staff should continue to monitor themselves for symptoms of COVID-19 or any situations of high-risk exposure (such as a family member in the household with COVID-19) and self-isolate as necessary, according to public health guidelines. Please connect with your Divisional Employee Relations Department with any staffing related questions.

### What do we need to know about testing for COVID-19?

Testing must be done by a health professional (e.g. doctor, nurse, lay health care worker). TSA Ministry Units should contact their local public health authority to learn how testing is being done in your jurisdiction. You may need to locate the nearest assessment centre for directing the families of program participants who shows symptoms of COVID-19.

### What if a staff member or program participant is showing symptoms?

If someone has been exposed to the virus or is displaying symptoms (e.g. fever, a new cough or difficulty breathing), please:

* Contact local public health office immediately. If the person has a health provider, call them by phone, to enquire about testing.
* Ask the person to wear a mask to prevent transmission to other people; if a mask is not available, provide tissues for them to cover their mouth and nose as much as possible.
* Ask the person to wash their hands with either liquid soap and running water and dry with paper towels, or with alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
* Move the person to a separate area of the building where they are at least 2 meters (6 feet) away from other clients and staff.
* If the client is in distress, call 9-1-1.
* Contact your funder or system-planner to develop a plan for this individual (e.g. testing, isolation). Follow proper incident reporting protocols to public health and DHQ.
* If symptoms are being experienced prior to arrival, affected staff or program participant should not attend the program.

### What do we do if a staff member, volunteer or program participant has a confirmed case of COVID-19?

If someone with a confirmed case of COVID-19 is attending your program space, be sure to close off any areas that they’ve been in contact with until there has been time for a thorough cleaning and disinfecting process. If possible, wait 24 hours to clean the space to reduce the risk of exposure for the individual responsible for cleaning. Consider developing a **contact tracing** questionnaire or asking contact tracing questions at intake. You can find guidance from your local public health units. The World Health Organization provides information on establishing contact tracing capacity [here](file:///C%3A/Users/Amy_Fisher/AppData/Local/Microsoft/Windows/INetCache/Content.Outlook/S5238SP4/The%20World%20Health%20Organization%20has%20prepared%20this%20advice%20for%20establishing%20contract%20tracing%20capacity%3A%20https%3A/www.who.int/publications/i/item/contact-tracing-in-the-context-of-covid-19).

If a staff person gets ill, please refer to your Divisional Employee Relations team in regard to handling their absence. If a staff or volunteer become ill, please ask them not to return to the program until they have recovered.

### When can we stop the additional safety measures put in place?

Each provincial and regional health plan will differ with the timeline for this. With the phased approach, additional safety measures can be slowly reduced until we are able to return to normal protocol. It’s vitally important that we maintain the guidelines put in place for as long as needed in order to ensure the safety of our staff and clients. Connect with your local public health authority if you are unsure of what measures need to be in place for your program at this time. You should also have familiarity with your provincial reopening plan and what parts of it apply to your program type to guide you moving forward.

# Other considerations

### Are there health and safety considerations to be made when reopening after a prolonged closure?

After a building has been closed for a period of time, it is important to ensure that all elements of the building’s health and safety equipment is in working order. Ensure mechanical, ventilation, and fire safety systems operate properly. If possible, open windows and doors to increase circulation of air flow within your program space. Test and ensure water systems (taps, water fountains, etc.) are safe to minimize the risk of waterborne diseases. It is also key to be sure that all staff are up-to-date in Territorial Health and Safety training as outlined in the Territorial Health and Safety Manual.

### How do we handle a potential high volume of client inquiries upon reopening?

There is potential to have a higher than normal amount of client inquiries one your program reopens after a COVID-19 related closure. Steps to take to be prepared for these questions could include:

* Updating your voicemail, social media pages and/or website with current program information. Ensure that your messaging is clearly current, such as stating the date in your voicemail message.
* Identify someone on your team responsible for responding to inquiries and staying current on COVID-19 as it relates to your program type.
* Ensure regular briefing with your staff team to ensure everyone is up to date on the most current information as the program reopens.

### These extra measures put pressure on our budget. What should we do?

Review your financial position. The management team should review and forecast the implications to the current budget. Planning and support can be provided by your divisional office. Contact your funder for any contingency funds they may have access too, especially during “states of emergency.” Increasing public relations coverage of the increased needs could draw additional public support.

Additionally, in various communities across Canada (particularly in Ministry Units still funded on a per diem basis), we’re seeing additional stress on operating budgets and worries for the future. If you need support to reimagine your programs and services in the context of the pandemic and beyond, THQ Social Services is available to support this important exercise in analysis and innovation. Together with your Division, please be in touch with you Regional Consultants

### I have questions related to staffing as my program reopens. Who should I contact?

Your Divisional Employee Relations Department will be your primary resource to connect with related to staffing as your program reopens. Please see also the Employee Relations FAQ documents available at the following location: <https://salvationist.ca/covid-19/departmental-faqs/>.

### I have questions that aren’t answered here. Who should I contact?

Resources and advice are available to you from your Divisional Employee Relations Department, your Area Commander/Divisional Social Services Secretary and from the Territorial Social Services Department:

Regional Social Services Consultants:

* David Reid (BC, AB&T, NL&L)
* Charlotte Dingwall (ON, MAR)
* Dahlia Sherif (PRA, QC, BR)

# Sources Consulted & Additional Resources

Government of Canada, Risk-informed decision-making guidelines for workplaces and businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic, <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/guidance-documents/risk-informed-decision-making-workplaces-businesses-covid-19-pandemic.html>

Government of Canada, Hard surface disinfectants and hand sanitizers (COVID-19), <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/disinfectants/covid-19.html>

Government of Canada, COVID-19: Indigenous awareness resources, <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1586548069915/1586548087539>

Government of Bermuda, Infection Prevention and Control Training, <https://www.gov.bm/infection-prevention-and-control-training>

Public Health and Safety Association (PSHSA), Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Resource Centre, <https://www.pshsa.ca/covid-19>

The Salvation Army Canada and Bermuda (2020), Frequently Asked Questions: Community & Family Services & COVID-19, <https://salvationist.ca/covid-19/resources/>

The Salvation Army Canada and Bermuda (2020), Frequently Asked Questions: Housing & Homelessness Services and COVID-19, <https://salvationist.ca/covid-19/resources/> \* See also a webinar presented by Public Health Ontario on cohorting in congregate settings [here](https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/event-presentations/managing-covid-19-outbreaks-congregate-settings.pdf?la=en).)

The Salvation Army Canada and Bermuda (2020), Plans to Gradually Ease Restrictions and Reopen, Personal Protective Equipment re: COVID-19, FAQ – Issue 1, May 7, 2020

The Salvation Army Canada and Bermuda (2020), THQ Employee Relations and Social Services re: COVID-19, Questions and Answers Compilation, Issue 4, May 11, 2020

\*\*\*See also COVID-19 FAQ: Volunteer Management, available here: <https://salvationist.ca/covid-19/resources/>

\*\*\*See also Spiritual & Religious Care Tips, available here: <https://salvationist.ca/covid-19/resources/>

\*\*\*See also Employee Relations FAQ, available here: <https://salvationist.ca/covid-19/resources/>