

April 2020

Hello Health Directors,

Thank you for submitting a Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) order on behalf of the Health Care Workers and First Responders in your Community. We want to acknowledge community concerns about PPE supply levels and allocation, and give additional information about how PPE is being provided at this time.

**During this time of limited supply, FNHA is only able to access and provide PPE supplies for community health care workers and first responders providing direct patient care during essential and urgent health care services.**

In all health care organizations, obtaining PPE has been challenging, as worldwide supply chains are strained. Access to provincial procurement processes for PPE are currently available on a weekly basis, but, as with other Health Authorities, FNHA is often being allocated only a small portion of the orders that we submit.

In accordance with this, please be aware that although supply deliveries to any given community may not reflect the full amount requested, they will continue to be delivered as they become available, based on allocation priority, by the Regional team.

A reminder that Personal Protective Equipment is just one small part of a best-practice approach to protecting staff and Community members from COVID. Due to opportunities for accidental contamination when putting on or taking off the equipment, PPE is an additional protective step, and is not a replacement for physical distancing, and strong infection prevention and control strategies.

Again, at this time of supply constraint, PPE is being provided for health care staff and first responders who are delivering urgent and essential health care services, directly to clients. During a pandemic it is important that all programs and care delivery are reviewed to determine which programs are urgent and essential health care services, and re-organizing or re-thinking services to deliver that care safely.

**In line with Public Health Officer orders across the health care system all non-urgent or essential programs and health services should be post-poned, or moved to online/ by phone service models whenever safe and possible.**

- In addition, mechanical strategies, such as creating clear barriers around triage or reception area staff and marking out 2m spacing in any area line-ups are needed,
- Signs should be placed prominently in all health care settings, reminding symptomatic individuals to wash hands, use a procedure mask and inform staff immediately of their symptoms so that they can wait and be cared for away from other individuals,
- Soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer should be placed at entrances to health centres or other essential services buildings,
- Environmental cleaning, particularly of high-touch areas such as doors, counters, and chairs should be implemented frequently, by trained staff,
- Reorienting services from home to clinic whenever safe and possible will facilitate much more efficient use of PPE (clinic staff require many times fewer PPE changes),
- Guidelines for safe extended use of procedure masks and re-use of face shields or goggles should be implemented of for all Health Care Workers and First Responders (*1 face shield/ goggles per staff member, disinfect and reuse, 2-3 procedure masks/ shift- don, changing only if soiled, wet or before/ after breaks*).

In general, Communities should continue to emphasize to all members:

- good hand hygiene (frequently cleaning hands with liquid soap and water or an alcohol- based hand sanitizer),
- maintain physical distancing,
- avoid social gatherings,
- cover cough and sneezes with a flexed elbow or tissue,
- stay home if you have any signs of illness, even if symptoms are mild,
- working with Community leadership and FNHA Health Benefits/ Medical transportation to determine if a symptomatic or exposed person needs alternate housing options to keep themselves and others safe.

If you have specific concerns about the allocation of PPE please contact FNHA at [COVID19needs@fnha.ca](mailto:COVID19needs@fnha.ca).

Thank you again for your understanding as we work through this challenging situation.

The FNHA PPE Working Group