

MEMORANDUM

Date: April 20, 2020

File: 195/20 – All BCEHS Staff
CLIFF: 1060060

To: All BCEHS Staff

Re: Improving Access for Patients in Rural, Remote and Indigenous Communities

Today the BC government announced a new framework that will help ensure people living in rural, remote and Indigenous communities in BC have access to health care they can count on to meet their unique needs during the COVID-19 pandemic and into the future.

The framework was developed through a partnership between the First Nations Health Authority, the Northern Health Authority and BC Emergency Health Services, as part of the Provincial Health Services Authority. The framework adds to work underway to foster a culturally-safe healthcare system.

The framework includes:

- Self-isolation accommodations close to hospitals so people can quickly access care if their illness worsens.
- Housing options for people self-isolating near their families in their home communities.
- Improved medical transportation systems, including flight and ambulance services, to help people access appropriate and timely care.
- Enhanced virtual primary care so that people in rural, remote and Indigenous communities with limited or no access to their own doctors or nurse practitioners can access primary health care closer to home.
- Faster testing methods, so people can learn about their results sooner and take any steps needed to keep themselves and their communities safe.
- Contact tracing that recognizes privacy challenges in smaller communities.
- Culturally safe mental health supports close to home.

As part of this, BCEHS has prepared to add additional resources to our fleet. Depending on demand, this could include an additional 55 ground ambulances across the province, including six in the Northern Health Authority. In addition, BCEHS will add five planes and helicopters to bolster our medical transport capacity across the province if needed.

The planning work is underway regarding the deployment of these additional resources and will be dependent on needs in different parts of the province and the demand resulting from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. We will continue to work with the health authorities and the Ministry of Health on this and will share more details once they are finalized.

Building this additional internal capacity will enable us to ensure our provincial service remains efficient and able to adjust effectively as needed.

Thank you for all you continue to do to meet the needs of our patients despite the current COVID-19 challenges.

Original signed by

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Original signed by

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