

Inpatient Staff Support – FAQ (Updated March 17, 2021)

We have developed the below FAQ, which staff can reference as a script, to help navigate conversations with inpatient clients and families.

While there may not always be an immediate answer available, please be solutions-focused in your approach. Acknowledge the question, concern, feedback and let the family know that Holland Bloorview will endeavour to address them as best and as soon as they can in light of changing protocols/practices/guidelines around COVID-19.

Please feel free to also reference our [All Staff FAQ](#).

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Preventing the spread of COVID-19 - isolation protocols, staff testing

What if I begin to experience symptoms and I am my child or loved one's only caregiver?

If you are at the hospital or at home and begin to experience symptoms, please notify your child or loved one's care team **immediately**. We ask that you please go or stay home and wait for further instructions from your child's care team. We understand that potentially being away from your child or loved one may be a very scary thought, but it is important that parents or family caregivers take care of themselves too. While we won't be able to replicate the role you play at bedside, your child or loved one's care team is here to offer support should you need to self-isolate.

Do any members of my care team work at multiple sites? Should I be concerned?

If a member of your care team worked at a hospital that had an outbreak, but they did not work on the affected unit, they can continue to work at Holland Bloorview. The only exception is for respiratory therapists (RTs). RTs always wear high levels of personal protective equipment (PPE) and they can report to work at Holland Bloorview as long as they have no symptoms of COVID-19. Since RTs are in high demand at this time, this policy allows us to continue to meet the needs of our clients and ensures we have proper staffing during all shifts.

With COVID-19 cases growing in the community, why aren't we doing more to lock down and restrict movement of staff and clients to and from the community?

We understand that the rising number of COVID-19 cases in the community is making you feel anxious about the safety of you and your child. Despite rising numbers in Toronto, we are confident that Holland Bloorview is a safe place for you and your child and the risk of exposure to the COVID-19 virus within our walls is low.

We have a number of safety measures in place to reduce potential spread, like daily screening, masking, promotion of physical distancing, hand washing, enhanced cleaning and encouraging staff who can work from home to do so.

We are always reviewing our safety measures and evaluate the risk of all of our activities to keep you and everyone in our community safe.

Why do clients that test positive require a 10-day isolation period? I thought it was 14 days.

Public health guidelines require a 10-day isolation period from the onset of symptoms. Following this, an additional 24 hours of being symptom free is required before being removed from isolation.

A 14 day isolation is required for those that might have been exposed (but not diagnosed) to COVID-19 and accounts for the virus's incubation period. Anyone that has been asked to self isolate by occupational health or local health authorities should do so until cleared.

What factors do you consider for testing clients and having them be in isolation?

All in-patient clients are tested prior to arrival at Holland Bloorview for a variety of viruses including COVID-19, flu and rhinovirus. We are closely monitoring for the onset of symptoms that will impact our clients' health.

Generally speaking, a client will be placed in isolation if they have symptoms of conditions like COVID-19 or the flu. If we decide to re-test a client (or “re-swab”), the sample is tested for the same viruses we looked for during admission. This includes COVID-19, flu and rhinovirus.

It is important to note that we generally do not re-test for COVID-19 after a positive diagnosis because a person might still be shedding dead virus cells that will be picked up on the test for up to six months. Instead, we have a 10-day isolation period from symptom onset followed by 24 hours of being symptom free before being removed from isolation.

Every case is looked at individually. We look at baseline measures, the onset of new symptoms, prior testing results and if the client has previously been in isolation.

I/one person in our household have/has one COVID-19 symptom, why can't my child go to school at the BSA?

Effective February 16, all BSA students, including Resource Program students (inpatient clients), must pass a new screening checklist in order to go into the school. With the revised checklist, caregivers of all students (including those in their household) must now also pass the screening in order for the child to attend class in-person at the school.

Screening will be done by the nursing staff on the units or at the main screening desk when caregivers of Resource Program students come into the hospital.

The Resource Program student cannot attend school if:

- Anyone in their household has a symptom. The individual with a symptom needs a negative COVID-19 test before the student may return to school.
- Anyone in their household has traveled outside of Canada.
- Anyone in their household has been notified as a close contact of someone with COVID-19 or have been told to self isolate. The student (inpatient client) will be isolated and likely swabbed here at the hospital.

Additional questions about whether your child can come into the school can be e-mailed to the BSA's principal, Sarah Nauman (snauman@hollandbloorview.ca). Questions about infection prevention and control (IPAC) can be addressed to Cara Sudoma (csudoma@hollandbloorview.ca) or Caroline Ivorra (civorra@hollandbloorview.ca).

Why can I no longer enter the BSA to drop off/pick up my child?

Effective March 1st, caregivers to Resource Program students (inpatients) cannot enter the BSA unless they have a scheduled appointment. This aligns with the directions given by Toronto Public Health and is being enforced by school boards in the community. Your child's classroom team will share information as to the best way to communicate with them moving forward (i.e. if you have a question or an update to share about your child).

Limit to family caregivers onsite

Why did Holland Bloorview temporarily reduce the number of family caregivers allowed in the hospital?

Reducing the number of family caregivers in the hospital was a directive that we received from the Ministry of Health in Ontario early on in the pandemic. We know from listening to your lived experiences that in-person caregiver support is extremely important for the well-being of your loved one and your family.

To summarize (effective January 25, 2021):

- Each client can have up to 2 individuals (down from 3) over the age of 16 be identified as designated caregivers and come onsite and visit their loved one. Everyone must still undergo screening to ensure safety for all. Please reach out to a member of your care team to add someone to your designated caregivers list.
- Up to 2 designated caregivers over the age of 16 can be onsite to visit their loved one from 8am to 11pm.
- One caregiver may remain overnight starting at 11pm.

We hope the above will allow for easier handover between caregivers, facilitate any necessary or desired training (for equipment, medications, etc.) and allow for easier participation in family/team meetings.

Caregivers are no longer required to wait 24 hours before switching out with a second designated caregiver – the switch can happen at any time.

Note for inpatient staff: We will no longer be swabbing caregivers upon admission, which will facilitate the switching out process. Nurses will screen the caregivers of the children in their care on a daily basis and we will continue to enforce physical distancing, screening and masking measures.

How long will these strict measures be in place at the hospital?

We want you to know that ministry guidance for acute care hospitals and rehabilitation hospitals are different. As well, the design of the inpatient rooms in acute care hospitals, like SickKids, is different than Holland Bloorview (e.g. more private rooms). At this time, we are continuing to follow our guidance from the ministry around having only **one** caregiver present at the bedside. We will be sure to notify you as soon as a change or loosening of this expectation takes place.

COVID-19 cases at Holland Bloorview

How many cases of COVID-19 were reported at the hospital?

As of March 17, 2021, there have been:

- 20 staff cases (all recovered)
- One inpatient client case (all recovered)
- 8 Bloorview School Authority cases (all staff and student cases recovered)

There's a COVID-positive case on this unit and I'm concerned about my safety. Can you tell me who the staff and/or family/client was that tested positive for the virus?

We are encouraged to remember that as a hospital, the privacy and confidentiality of our clients, families and staff is always of utmost importance. We acknowledge your anxiety and are here to support you. Despite our collective and individual best efforts, we may continue to see more COVID-positive cases.

Regarding any current and future COVID-19 cases within the Holland Bloorview community, we would appreciate your partnership in respecting the privacy of the impacted individuals. Your compassion is warmly received and appreciated.

If a member of your care team is absent, we will strive to reschedule your loved one's therapy appointments.

To maintain transparency, we will be including at the bottom of our weekly inpatient letters updated information on new and existing COVID-19 cases.

How will I know if I'm at risk of testing positive for the virus? What is Holland Bloorview doing to keep us safe?

With contact tracing, you would have been contacted by our IPAC team if you needed to take any precautions like taking a COVID test or self-isolating. We ask for your patience as depending on the list of possible individuals who were in close contact with the COVID-positive person, this process undertaken by our IPAC and Occupational Health team will take time.

If staff, clients and families continue to follow safety guidelines and wear appropriate PPE, the inpatient unit is a low-risk environment.

Why has my care team changed? Why isn't x person providing care now?

Staff can be off duty for various reasons – personal health, family emergencies, school closings and personal child care needs. We are encouraged to remember that as a hospital, the privacy and confidentiality of our clients, families and staff is always of utmost importance. We acknowledge your anxiety and concerns and are here to support you and stay true to our commitment to safe, quality care.

If a member of your care team is absent, we will strive to reschedule your loved one's therapy appointments and/or look into other ways to facilitate them i.e. virtual. We appreciate your continued support for your child's care needs – we will work together as one team to ensure your loved one's rehabilitation goals are met.

If you are concerned about the risk of contracting the virus, with contact tracing, you would have been contacted by our IPAC team if you needed to take any precautions like taking a COVID test or self-isolating. We ask for your patience as depending on the list of possible individuals who were in close contact with the COVID-positive person, this process undertaken by our IPAC and Occupational Health team will take time. Thank you for your continued partnership.

Vaccine eligibility for inpatient clients and caregivers

Can my child or any of his/her caregivers get the COVID-19 vaccine?

Holland Bloorview is advocating for the vaccination of both caregivers and children. We are waiting for Ontario Health (the provincial agency responsible for monitoring health care policy and quality standards) to provide us with direction about vaccinating clients who meet the current age requirement and their designated caregivers.

The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is currently approved for those 16 years and older and both the Moderna and newly approved AstraZeneca and Johnson & Johnson vaccines have been approved for those who are 18 years and older. Because there is no vaccine for children under 16, we advocate for a child's ecosystem (caregivers, educators, etc.) to be vaccinated.

We will share details with you when they are available, however please feel free to reach out to a member of your care team if you have any questions, concerns or comments.

Changes to meal service

Why were there changes made to meal service?

We have learned from public health that outbreaks in nursing homes, communal settings and hospitals have originated in dining rooms and break rooms, as well as during communal activities.

What are the changes?

To promote physical distancing and prevent crowding and the potential spread of COVID-19, the following changes came into effect on Wednesday, February 3rd. We will evaluate the effectiveness of this strategy and make adjustments as needed. Changes include:

- Clients in private rooms will be asked to take meals back to their room.

- For those in semi-private or quad rooms, there will be a weekly schedule where families can rotate and eat their meals in the dining area.
- Meal times will start 15 minutes early and be divided into two (2) 25-minute seating sessions. Your nurse will inform you of your dining schedule.

Onsite COVID-19 testing service

Why is Holland Bloorview now offering a COVID-19 testing service?

Holland Bloorview's expertise working with children with physical, developmental and complex medical conditions gives us a unique perspective in being able to create a comfortable and safe COVID-19 testing environment for this population.

Families of children with disabilities have been vocal about unsatisfactory experiences accessing COVID-19 testing for their children. By launching a COVID-19 testing service (launched mid-December 2020) specifically designed to meet the needs of this population, we are fulfilling an important and much needed community resource.

Since this service is in close proximity to the hospital, will this increase the risk of COVID-19 cases at Holland Bloorview?

Safety is always our top priority and every effort to reduce crossover between staff, clients, families and members of the community accessing the COVID-19 testing service was considered when planning the logistics and operations of the service.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, we have followed all public health guidelines to ensure the safety of our community. We have received additional clinical guidelines related specifically to the safe operations of a COVID-19 testing service, which we will also be following closely.

A reminder that, the best way to prevent the spread of COVID-19 is by wearing mask, physical distancing and washing your hands. We are grateful for all of your efforts to keep our community safe. Please continue to do your part to reduce potential spread of the virus.

Is the testing service only accessible to Holland Bloorview clients and families?

Since December 14, 2020, the testing centre has been open to children with disabilities who meet the criteria for testing who may not be Holland Bloorview clients. An appointment is required to access the service and can be made by calling 416-419-4623 (line is open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. seven days a week and staffed by Holland Bloorview and SickKids staff).

Our site also just expanded this testing service to Holland Bloorview alumni – former clients with medical complexities and developmental disorders, regardless of age.

What is the criteria to be eligible for the testing service?

Children and family members must meet the eligibility criteria for testing, via a questionnaire, in order to successfully book an appointment. These include but are not limited to:

- Referral by the child's school related to an exposure in the classroom
- Children with physical, developmental and complex medical conditions who cannot be served by their local testing centre.

What are we doing to prevent the risk of transmission to inpatient staff, families/caregivers and clients?

The COVID-19 testing service will be held during off-peak hours in the entrance of the Bloorview School Authority (BSA) from **Monday to Thursday, 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. and Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.**

We are prioritizing the safety of everyone in our community in executing this service, including the staff who will be providing the testing and families who will be accessing it. Specific safety measures:

- testing by appointment only
- scheduling enough time for testing and cleaning between clients
- hosting the testing service after-hours
- physical location away from in-patient clients and families with a separate entrance
- use of appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) by our staff members

Families will also be able to park close to the BSA entrance in order to enter and exit the building as quickly as possible. Families accessing the testing service will not be permitted to use any facilities on-site, including access to the washroom.

Will we be testing family caregivers and siblings as well?

We will be offering testing to up to two family members (family caregivers and/or siblings) for each child that requires testing. As we have been approved to conduct a limited amount of tests per week, we cannot provide swabs to additional family members at this time.

Will Holland Bloorview staff be providing the testing?

The testing service will be operated by Holland Bloorview staff, as we are uniquely qualified to provide this essential service to kids living with disabilities. The swabs will be sent to SickKids for analysis.

Staff members operating the clinic will be provided with all of the essential personal protective equipment (PPE) to do their job confidently and safely, while also continuing to provide care in their home positions.

Will Holland Bloorview staff providing the testing be allowed to also continue in their roles in outpatient/inpatient units?

Yes, the staff who will be conducting the COVID-19 tests will continue to provide care in the inpatient and outpatient units, depending on their role.

A reminder that staff members operating the clinic will be provided with all of the essential personal protective equipment (PPE) to do their job confidently and safely, while also continuing to provide care in their home positions.

How will the screening stations be sanitized and kept clean?

As part of our agreement to operate the COVID-19 testing service, we have received new additional clinical guidelines specifically to ensure the safe operations of a COVID-19 testing service from Toronto Public Health, which we will also be following closely. This includes disinfecting the area between appointments, as well as end-of-day sanitation.

Weekend Pass (WP), Day Pass

Was this change in criteria for Weekend Pass due to the pandemic?

This change in criteria is part of a new practice change that we are beginning to explore as part of the rehabilitation journey for all inpatient clients. The pandemic has allowed us to re-evaluate and re-shape some of our processes and approaches to care and WP is one of them. The experiences of learning new routines with medication, equipment and other resources when on a WP will support ongoing planning for your loved one's safe discharge.

You may go on a WP when this criteria is met:

- All inpatient clients admitted from another facility **must remain onsite for the first two weekends** of their stay with us. For safety reasons, there will be no exceptions (i.e. clients and their families will benefit from practicing at the hospital first what their new routines will look like).
- Clients and their families must be able to safely complete any care routines (e.g. medication administration), and have discussed their readiness to go home with their rehab team.
- The availability of LHIN supports may impact individual WP timelines.
- All clients and their households will be screened for COVID-19 symptoms and exposure before going on WP and returning to Holland Bloorview.

Note to inpatient staff: Please refer to the new LOA Guidance document (effective Nov. 9th) provided by Dolly Menna-Dack.

Can my loved one be granted a Day Pass?

At this time we cannot grant Day Passes. There are exceptions only for community mobility assessments

with occupational therapy and physiotherapy and for support with getting into and out of your family vehicle (e.g. car, van).

At this time, we ask that clients do not accompany their caregivers to neighbourhood retailers (e.g. Whole Foods, Shoppers Drug Mart) to prevent the spread of and exposure to COVID-19.

Indoor Visits Policy

*****There is a current pause on indoor visits (effective January 18, 2021)*** Will announce when it is reactivated.**

How often can we book a request for indoor visits?

There is no longer a limit to how many times a family may book a visit per week. However, if you wish to request back-to-back visits, please make the request 3 days in advance. The indoor family visits liaisons are Yonatan Shulman and Kimberly Wong.

Updates:

- Indoor visits are in meeting rooms on Level 0 (OW220 and OW225) as well as in two designated areas of the cafeteria → total of 4 spaces that can be booked.
- Also due to less requests for Mondays and Fridays, visits can now only be requested on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, weekends and statutory holidays. This policy will be revisited if Monday and Friday bookings are requested or if our census increases and the extra days are needed.
- Hours for weekend visits will be from 9:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. due to staffing changes.

How many people can take part in a visit?

A total of six (6) people can take part in a visit, **including the client**. The client and their parent(s)/guardian(s) are to identify the visitors upon booking. All visitors will be screened at the main entrance. Anyone that doesn't pass screening will not be allowed to visit.

If you wish to request an exception to the number of visitors, please e-mail inpatientcaregivers@hollandbloorview.ca at least 3 days before the scheduled meeting. A response will be given within 3 business days.

Do we still need to mask or physically distance?

When arriving onsite, continue to wear the mask you had on in the community until you reach the screening desks.

Everyone partaking in the visit must wear the medical mask (provided at screening) at all times (e.g. no eating or drinking) while onsite at Holland Bloorview. All visitors over the age of six (6) must wear masks.

As of November 19, in alignment with public health's direction not to visit anyone outside of your own home, everyone participating in a visit must be from the same household.

Those not able to wear masks for the duration of the visit should refrain from taking part in the visit. This is to protect your loved one and the children on the units from asymptomatic exposure to COVID-19. Children under 2 should **not** wear a mask, due to the risk of suffocation.

What do I need to know about booking a visit?

Caregivers need to notify their care team of their request for a visit ***at least 24 hours in advance*** (especially if a nurse is required to accompany your child) and ***just before heading downstairs for an indoor visit.*** Visits may be booked online through the Pick-a-Time system – you can ask a clerical assistant if you need help with the booking. When booking a visit, please use the link below:
hollandbloorview.ca/indoor-visits

Are these supervised and are there designated areas for indoor visits?

No, they are not supervised, rather, volunteers will oversee indoor visits and will escort family caregivers/visitors to the designated visiting areas: Pre-selected rooms on Floor 0 and 2 designated areas in the cafeteria.

What happens when members of the visiting group are running late?

Kindly remind your family members/visitors to come on time for the visit as the visiting group will only be escorted to the designated area when all members have arrived and have been screened. Visits may need to be forfeited and rescheduled if running 15 minutes late.

Day Program

Who can access the Day Program?

Before the pandemic, the program was available to clients who were medically stable and required 2 or more hospital services more than 2 times a week.

As part of a phased approach in resuming this program, it is currently **only open to inpatient clients transitioning home.** Your care team will make the referral if appropriate.

Will transportation be provided to and from the hospital?

Bussing is not available so families and caregivers will need to arrange for transportation.

What infection prevention and control (IPAC) measures are in place?

- Limited to 5 participants max. at a time to adhere to physical distancing requirements

- Participants will be screened daily (provided an “I have been screened sticker”) and are required to wear a mask
- Participants will be required to stay home when sick or if in contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19
- Siblings of participants are not permitted to attend with the designated caregiver (exceptions can be made with advance notice)

Activities for inpatient families and caregivers

What kind of activities exist for my child on the weekend?

Music & Arts activities for clients ages 6-18 take place on Saturday and Sunday starting at 1pm. There is limited capacity due to COVID-19 restrictions. To sign up, please see the BIRT/SODR central nursing pod or speak to your Therapeutic Recreation Specialist. Families can also book equipment (balls, etc.) for outside use.

Effective January 22, 2021, there are opportunities for clients and their caregivers to participate in weekend activities that support their loved one’s therapy goals in a fun and meaningful way. [This opportunity may be especially of interest to families who are not yet ready or qualified for Weekend Passes.](#) Space is limited due to COVID-19 room capacity restrictions, however new activities such as robotics will be offered in the Conference Centre so participants can safely distance from others.

What options exist for adult interaction, social ways to connect with other families safely?

Inpatient Parent Talks are for any caregivers on the inpatient unit who would like to connect with each other and a Family Mentor in a group setting. Family Mentors are parents of former clients and volunteers who draw from their lived experience with childhood disability to provide peer support to current clients and families.

Groups usually take place in person, but we will be adapting to virtual meetings over Zoom. Posters will be distributed on the units so that you know where to join online. To find out when future inpatient caregiver events are happening, or if you have questions, please e-mail Melissa Ngo at mngo@hollandbloorview.ca.