

SFMH Special COVID-19 Communique to our Partners

COVID-19: We're preparing

A pandemic such as COVID-19 can overwhelm the capacity of emergency departments (EDs), intensive care units, and hospitals in general, and lead to critical shortages of staff, space, and supplies. SFMH is taking direction from Public Health Ontario to proactively plan and prepare for the arrival of COVID-19 in our region/hospitals.

Stakeholder meeting

To help ensure a coordinated local response, Randy Penney chaired a special meeting Sunday March 15. Among those in attendance were Renato Discenza, Transitional Regional Lead, Ontario Health East, Dr. Rob Cushman, Acting Medical Officer of Health Renfrew County, Vicki Benoit (Public Health), Mike Nolan, Renfrew County Paramedic Service, Chiefs of Staff and Medical Directors for both SFMH and RVH. The entire Senior Team from RVH and SFMH were also present.

Screening & assessment

Based on consultation with stakeholders, and advice from Health Canada, virtual assessment and care will be employed as much as possible as an alternative to opening an assessment centre. Given that assessment centres have the potential to create mass gathering that mixes healthy and unhealthy people, a made-for-Renfrew-County, virtual assessment solution will help 'flatten the curve', and protect people and protect our Emergency Department by keeping more people at home. A task force has been established to operationalize this.

In the meantime, patients are being directed to continue to call Public Health or Telehealth.

Screening at the Main Entrance is in place. This is the only entrance to the Hospital. Our Hospital Administration will work with Public Health, Paramedic Service and other Hospitals in the County on a potential Renfrew county solution that will leverage technology and provide virtual care to keep individuals away from Hospital. Consideration is being given to accessing another 1-800 phone line that will be answered by Public Health, MD, RN and Paramedic.

Staffing & HR planning

In order to address challenges of patient volume/hospital capacity that may be posed by COVID-19 and the 14-day re-entry protocol:

- MVHPC is reducing services and limiting volunteers
- Family Health Team is operating phone clinics and restricting access to the Medical Building
- Rainbow Valley CHC is operating phone clinics and restricting access to the building
- Tenants of the Health Centre and Rainbow Valley have been notified to cancel clinics
- Social distancing is critical. This means no non-essential meetings, no conference attendance and upcoming large events are postponed for now.

What does "social distancing" mean?

Social distancing measures are taken to restrict when and where people can gather to stop or slow the spread of infectious diseases. Social distancing measures include limiting large groups of people coming together, closing buildings and canceling events.

Beyond that, it is avoiding close contact such as handshakes and hugs, and keeping a personal space of 1 to 2 metres from others.



Core services

Emergency, Medical Unit, Lab, Housekeeping, X-Ray, Pharmacy, Dietary, and CSR are all deemed essential to keep the organization functioning.

Non-essential services

In the next few days, in line with OHA and provincial guidance, as well as alignment with hospitals across the region, SFMH is temporarily cancelling non-essential services and out-patient clinics to preserve health human resource pandemic capacity and encourage social distancing. Staff in these areas may be asked to work from home or be temporarily reallocated to areas of need. Physicians will be reviewing standing orders for lab, as well as existing appointments for DI services to decide who can be rescheduled.

Supplies

- There is a severe shortage of swabs for testing. While we continue to advocate for supplies, this is a global issue and the probability of getting more is very low. In light of the situation, the limited supply on hand must be used very judiciously and orders must be co-signed by the Chief of Staff and Director of ER.
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE): Fit testing for N95 masks has been completed on all ER staff and physicians and is taking place for frontline staff as per Occupational Health & Safety regular maintenance list.

Patient flow

Processes are being developed to help direct patients who present with “regular” emergencies and those who present with symptoms of COVID 19. More information will follow.

Revised visitor policy

To protect patients and reduce the risks for all, we have restricted visiting to palliative patients only. Emergency patients will not be allowed to have someone with them unless they are the parent or guardian of a child or the patient cannot communicate or give clear detailed health information.

Thank you

It will be important to continue working together with all our partners and supporting one another in the days ahead, and do our part to contain the impact of COVID-19 locally.

