

Section V

Part 5

Illness in the Workplace, Policy and Review Procedure

Workplace Illness

None of us is guaranteed we will not be faced at some time in our lives with a serious illness such as cancer, heart disease, diabetes or Hepatitis B. Serious illnesses may be incommunicable such as diabetes or cancer or communicable such as Hepatitis B. Serious illnesses may raise questions and concerns about what will happen to us in our workplace. They impact our lives and the lives of our loved ones, friends and co-workers significantly.

This section includes our Illness in the Workplace Policy and Review Procedure.

Communicable Diseases

Communicable diseases refer to a host of diseases that include things like measles and mumps, influenza and Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, HIV/AIDS and TB. All are a health concern and can be spread or passed from one person to another. Some are spread easily through casual contact with droplets from nose and mouth while others can only be transmitted through direct contact with the blood or body fluids of an infected person. In this section we describe Universal Precautions which, if followed at all times, can help prevent the spread of infection. We strongly advise you to contact your doctor and/or Public Health Department directly if you wish more information or are concerned in any way about these diseases or any others.

Refer to Appendix D for a list of Reportable Communicable Diseases in B.C.

Tuberculosis (TB)

You are required to provide us with a TB Clearance when you join the CLS. However, due to the highly infectious nature of TB this does not guarantee you will remain free of infection in the future. If you have any questions about TB, its symptoms or its treatment we encourage you to ask your doctor or community health nurse.

Universal Precautions—Infection Control

Universal Precautions have been developed by the Public Health Department to help protect against and prevent infection. The idea behind Universal Precautions is that all people are potential carriers of any number of infectious germs. As we don't always know when a communicable disease or infection is present, we recommend you use Universal Precautions in your routines at all times. This will protect you, your co-workers and the individuals you support. Precautions may take some time getting used to, but soon they become just another of your many habits. If you work in a residence you need to follow these routines while still maintaining the warm and homey atmosphere common to any busy household and respecting the dignity of the supported individual(s). Please refer to "*Appendix B: Universal Precautions*" and check with your Coordinator if you have any questions or concerns. A pamphlet outlining Universal Precautions is available to you from Employee Services.

Special Precautions at the CLS

There may be specific situations where you risk being injured by an individual you are supporting. This may expose you to disease. The CLS and all employees must work together to ensure this risk is reduced to a minimum at all times. Speak to your Coordinator or Director if you are aware of situations where, for example, exposure to blood and/or bodily fluids might occur. Preventive measures will either be in place or will be developed to reduce this risk.

Sharing Medical Information

At the CLS, maintaining your health and safety, and that of your co-workers and the supported individuals, is of prime importance. It is for this reason that we ask you to share personal information about your health with us. When you are ill or if you are aware you have a communicable disease you must inform your Coordinator. As an employer, the CLS is allowed to request information as to the general nature of your illness. You are not required to share details other than the nature of your illness. Similarly, if an individual you support has a communicable disease or illness, that information will be shared with you so you may best protect yourself and the supported individual. It is only through communication and cooperation that we can work together to control and prevent the spread of infection.

Hepatitis B Vaccination and Procedures

If you have received the Hepatitis B vaccine in the past, you should check with your doctor or the Public Health Department if you have any questions about the necessity for revaccination.

If you work directly with an active carrier, contact your family physician to determine if you have a natural immunity against Hepatitis B. After consultation with your physician, if you desire to proceed with the vaccination, have your Coordinator report this to your Director who will advise you of the next steps to take.

Exposure to Hepatitis B—Take Immediate Action

Bodily fluids such as blood-to-blood contact, semen, vaginal secretions and saliva spread the Hepatitis B virus from an infected person to another. Sneezing, coughing, hugging or using the same dishes or cutlery does **not** spread it.

In the event of an exposure, apply first aid treatment to the area. Immediately call your physician and your Director and then have someone accompany you to a nearby hospital. Follow medical protocols as directed by the hospital.

Illness in the Workplace Policy

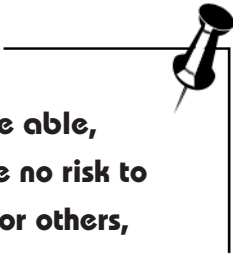
We recognize that if you have a serious illness you may wish to continue to engage in as many of your normal pursuits as your condition allows, including work. As long as you are able to meet acceptable performance standards, and medical evidence indicates your condition is not a threat to yourself or others, we will support you and ensure you are treated consistently with other employees. At the same time, the CLS seeks to provide a safe work environment for all employees and a safe environment for the supported individuals. Therefore, precautions should be taken to ensure your condition does not present a health and/or safety threat to other employees or the supported individuals.

Employees of the Community Living Society with a serious illness have the right to:

- continue working as long as their condition permits;
- receive the same benefits coverage as is accorded other employees (subject to any rules of the benefits plan regarding pre-existing conditions);
- confidentiality.

If you have any serious illness:

- you are not required to share any information with us other than the general nature of your illness, but if you have chosen to do so, we would only inform others (for example, co-workers, supported individuals and/or families/networks as applicable) after asking and receiving your specific permission. We would not speak to your physician without your prior consent.
- as long as you are able to meet acceptable performance and attendance standards, and medical evidence shows your condition and actions pose no threat to your own health and safety or that of others, we will encourage and support you in your efforts to continue to work.
- we will make reasonable accommodations to your job duties to the point of undue hardship to CLS, wherever possible.
- you are responsible for following Universal Precautions at all times.
- you and your doctor are responsible for evaluating your health. Together, you are responsible for making recommendations through your Director regarding your ability to perform your job adequately without endangering your own health or the health of others.
- you may be restricted from your work where the CLS, with benefit of medical opinion, believes:
 - you no longer have the capacity to perform one or more of the essential duties of your job;
 - despite all reasonable precautions, you pose an unacceptable risk to your own health and safety or the health and safety of others; or where
 - you are unwilling to observe the precautions needed to protect others.
- counseling is available through CLS’s Employee and Family Assistance program or, if you are covered, through your Extended Health benefits or Medical Services Plan.
(See Section VII, Part 1 and Section VII, Part 2).
- if you are unable to work and meet eligibility requirements you may be entitled to coverage under our Sick Leave policy and, if you are covered under CLS Group Benefits and qualify, to disability benefits. Long term disability coverage is subject to any rules of the plan regarding pre-existing conditions. Contact the benefits carrier for further information.



**If you are able,
and pose no risk to
yourself or others,
we encourage you to
continue to work**

- we have a Review Procedure in place for times when there may be a concern about health and safety around the issue of any serious illness. (*Please see Review Procedure below*).

Review Procedure

In the event there is a concern about health and safety around the issue of any serious illness a review will take place. Employee Services should be contacted regarding any proposed reviews.

When a Review will take Place

The CLS will review all instances on an individual basis, generally under the following circumstances:

- When the health or safety of others involved with a person who has a serious illness is a concern;
- When high-risk situations are perceived;
- When an employee's ability to perform normal activities is a concern;
- When an employee expresses reluctance to interact with a person who has a serious illness, such as refusal to work.

The Review Committee

The Community Living Society's Review Procedure will include:

- The person who has a serious illness
- Advocate, if the person wishes
- The employee who is refusing to work with an infected person (if this is the case)
- Advocate for the employee who is refusing to work, if that employee wishes
- Coordinator
- CLS Management
- Practising Physician

This group may or may not meet as a single committee, depending on the circumstances.

What will be Decided?

The Review Committee will:

- determine, subject to applicable legislation, who, if anyone, has the right to know;
- determine the degree of risk;
- determine, where there is a refusal to work, if the refusal is based on what the CLS agrees to be a reasonably held belief;
- determine necessary protective measures and appropriate guidelines;
- change any operating procedures as required;
- determine any relevant disciplinary measures that may be necessary.

The final decision and authority in each individual case will rest with the Executive Director.

Communicable Diseases that Require Reporting

If a supported individual or employee is identified by a physician as having a communicable disease on Schedule A or B on the List of Reportable Communicable Diseases in BC (see Appendix D), you must immediately contact your Coordinator and/or Director; then fill out the appropriate critical incident form as outlined in the Handbook.

(See also Section III, Part 4.3.)

In addition, you must immediately notify The Public Health Department and they will provide you, your Coordinator, Director, and your team with instructions on the proper procedures to follow. The Public Health Department will determine if an outbreak has occurred and appropriate procedures to follow in that event. Until such time as specific instructions are received, all employees should continue to follow Universal Precautions. *(See Appendix B - Universal Precautions.)*