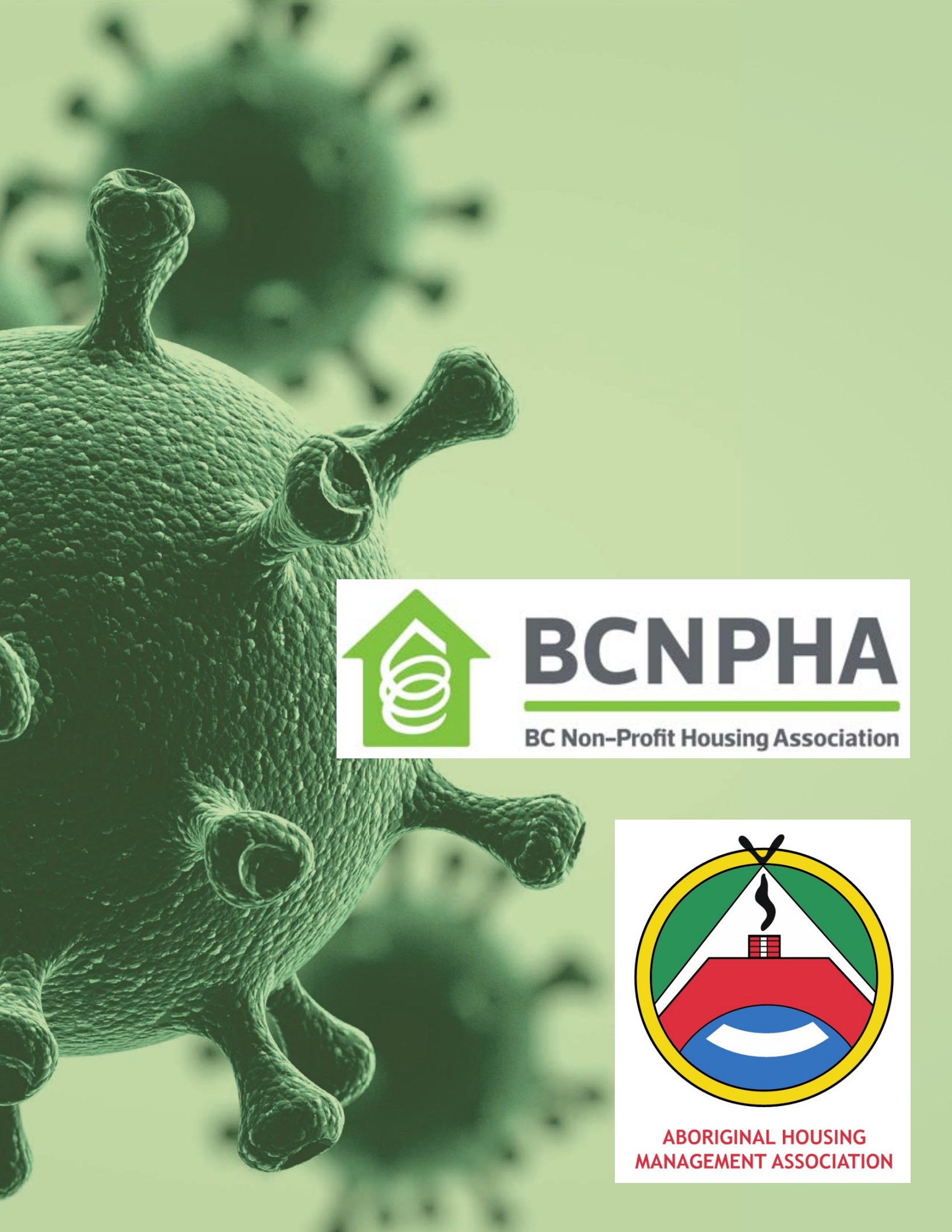
The background of the entire page is a microscopic image of numerous small, oval-shaped cells or spores, likely from a microorganism, rendered in a light blue color. The cells are scattered across the frame, with some appearing more distinct than others. The overall effect is a textured, scientific, and somewhat ethereal background.

Communicable Disease Planning Guide

FOR NON-PROFIT HOUSING
PROVIDERS



BCNPHA

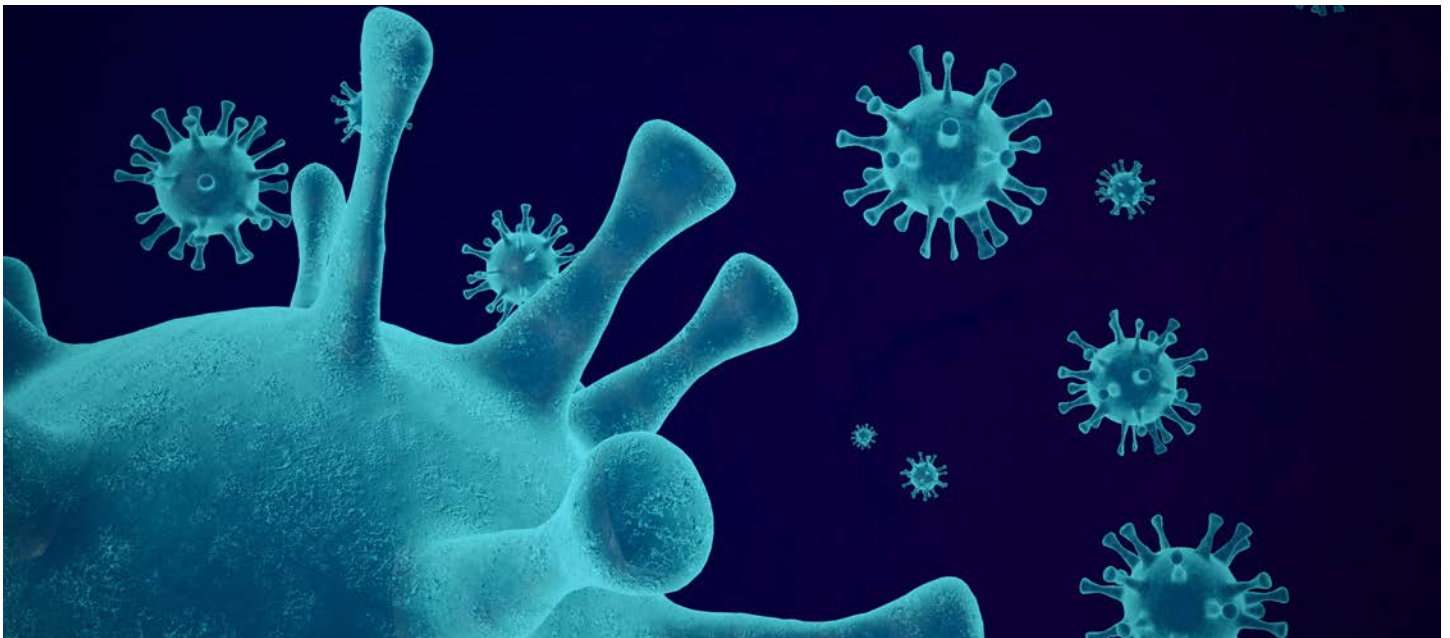
BC Non-Profit Housing Association



**ABORIGINAL HOUSING
MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION**

What is a Communicable Disease?

A communicable disease is an illness caused by an infectious agent or its toxic product that can be transmitted from person to person. Communicable diseases are typically highly contagious and, depending upon an individual's health condition, could lead to hospitalization and/or death.



Examples include COVID-19, norovirus, SARS and the seasonal flu. Implementing measures and controls in the workplace is essential to prevent the spread of infectious diseases.

Why a Communicable Disease Plan?

The purpose of this Planning Guide and template is to assist Housing Providers in identifying and implementing routine measures you can take to prevent the transmission of communicable diseases in the workplace and in the facilities you manage.

It also applies to circumstances where public health authorities advise of an elevated risk. In such situations, the plan will set measures that go beyond the common, everyday ones to stem the transmission of more widespread and virulent infections.

It is important to note that the level of risk of a communicable disease may increase or decrease over time, may be seasonal in nature as with the flu, may be contained to a particular region or more broadly transmitted as with COVID-19 which was of worldwide pandemic proportions and will vary in how it is spread.

Your Plan will consider all possible scenarios. It will be specific to each location and facility maintained and operated by your Society in accordance with Occupational Health & Safety (OHS) requirements and emergency orders and guidelines issued by BC's Provincial Health Officer (PHO).

7. Steps to a Communicable Disease Plan



1. Convene a Planning Team

2. Conduct Facility Risk Assessments

3. Identify Actions to Mitigate Risks

4. Develop a Business Continuity Plan

5. Communicate the Plan

6. Train Managers and Employees on the Plan

7. Monitor Conditions & Be Prepared to Act

1. Convene a Planning Team

Identify employees who will form your Society's planning team. Ideally, the team will include both managers and line staff. The role of the team is to oversee the development of a Communicable Disease Plan; to ensure that policies and procedures are in place and communicated to the workforce and that employees are trained on how to execute the

elements of the plan in the locations where they work.

The Planning Team will also create a means of monitoring and updating the plan in response to changes to the work environment, the addition of new facilities and in the event of elevated risks of infectious disease as advised by Provincial health authorities.

Name	Position	Location

2. Conduct Facility Risk Assessments

The Planning Team will assign responsibility for performing a risk assessment of each of the Society's sites. This involves conducting a walk-through of each facility operated by the Society and determining the level of risk of exposure to infectious viruses, ranking the risk as High, Medium or Low, depending on means of transmission and assuming no safety measures are in place.

Table 2.a below provides criteria by which the risk is assessed based on the probability or likelihood it will occur and the impact on the Society's workforce and operation if it does. A seasonal flu, for example, has a 'likely' to 'very likely' chance of occurring as these

infections appear regularly on an annual basis.

Influenza's impact on the workplace, however, is 'minor' to 'moderate' as workers may become ill and be absent from work for a few days but the spread is usually contained and there is a low chance that the impacts are life-threatening.

Conversely, a virus such as COVID-19 is a serious threat to health and safety, is highly infectious and as has been seen, has an extreme and dire effect. While the likelihood of another such virus emerging is unknown, precautions should nonetheless be taken and measures to contain transmission identified and ready to be put into effect if and when necessary.

3. Identify Actions to Mitigate Risks

Consider the different means of transmission of communicable disease. For each of the locations, identify the control measures and protocols you will put in place to prevent the risk of infection. Distinguish measures that you intend to have in place on an ongoing basis versus from those that would be essential during a period of elevated risk. For example, promoting handwashing and regular cleaning of high touch areas

are practices that are recommended for all locations at all times. These measures prevent the spread of common flu infections. More strident measures like the physical distancing and mask-wearing mandates that were implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic may not be necessary unless and/or until there is an elevated risk of viral infection that poses a threat to human life.



Modes of Transmission

The following are eight known modes of transmission of communicable diseases which are spread through direct or indirect contact.

DIRECT CONTACT

1. *Person-to-person* through *touch* (hug, kiss, handshake, physical interaction)
2. *Person-to-person* through *airborne* droplets (sneeze, cough, etc.)
3. *Animal to person* through a bite or through consumption of animal flesh or by-product
4. *Mother to unborn child*

INDIRECT CONTACT

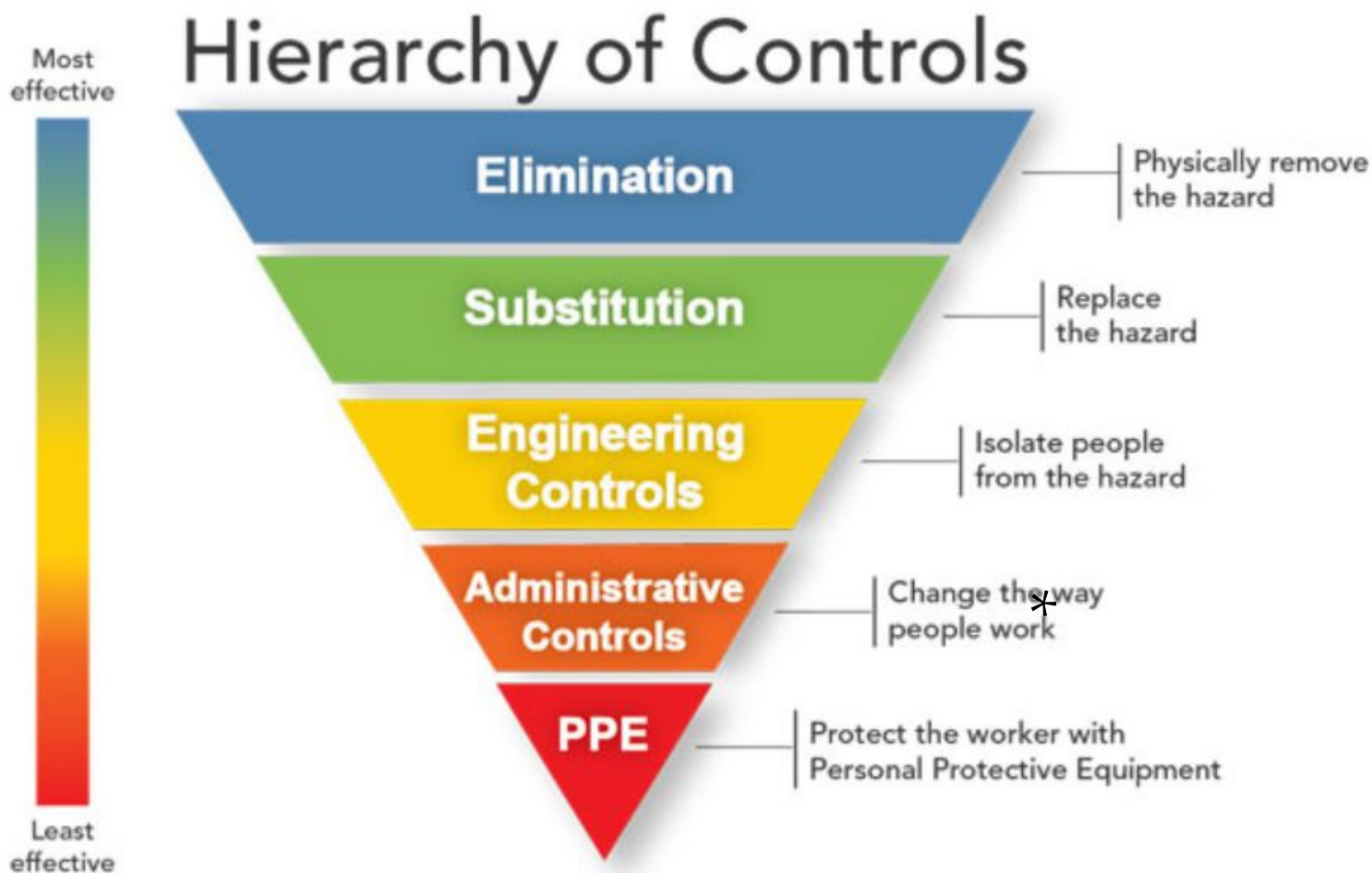
5. Person touches a contaminated object or surface
6. Airborne contaminants that remain in the air
7. Airborne from an infected animal
8. Insect bite

Of the above, the modes of transmission that are more likely to pose a risk to workers and residents are those that involve person-to-person physical and airborne transmission both direct and indirect.

The mode of transmission will determine the measures you will take to contain the spread of disease.

Figure 3.a below outlines the categories of controls and provides some examples of measures that would be included in the Communicable Disease Plan.

Figure 3.a



You don't need to start from scratch. Use your COVID-19 Safety Plan as the basis for creating a Communicable Disease plan. Highlight the measures that will continue post-COVID-19 and make sure they are captured in the plan and remain in place for all facilities. Identify the supplies you needed for containing COVID-19 transmission, maintain an emergency supply and keep records of suppliers, quantities and costs.

Hierarchy of Controls

Elimination involves methods to remove or eradicate the threat. In the case of a virus, one of the best known means of doing this is vaccination.

Substitution involves removing the threat and replacing it with a harmless alternative. For example, use of a non-toxic insect repellent or weed killer instead of a chemical. Substitution works when there is a safe alternative available. It is not an option, however, for the containment of infectious diseases.

Engineering Controls isolate people from the hazard through physical barriers or ventilation. These controls involve a physical change to the workplace, rather than changes in human behaviour. The erection of plexiglass barriers at service counters and between workstations is an example of an engineering control.

Administrative Controls involve changes in people's behaviour which are largely achieved through setting new policies and protocols, added regulations and restrictions. They require training and rely on people willing to comply and actively follow prescribed practices.

Personal Protective Equipment is protective clothing, masks, face shields, gloves, helmets, goggles, or other garments or equipment designed to protect the wearer's body from injury or infection.

4. Develop a Communicable Disease Plan

From the information gathered during the facility assessments, detail the elements of your Communicable Disease Plan. During a period of elevated risk, the province's health officials will declare a state of emergency and announce specific regulations, protocols and restrictions necessary to curb infection.



Identify control measures (or the absence of control measures) for each area of the facility. Use the schedules in the guide template to record actions you intend to put into effect in the event of a public health emergency. For each facility/site, record the following information:



1. Facility/Site Name
2. Work Area (e.g. Service desk, lunchroom, boardroom, playground, etc.)
3. Threat Level – High, Medium, Low
4. Risk Assessor
5. Health & Safety Rep
6. Site Supervisor
7. Date

Monitor and periodically assess the effectiveness of controls. Make adjustments as needed depending upon the anticipated amount of traffic in an area and when there is an outbreak, the likely incidence of infection based on public health information.

5. Communicate the Plan

Once you have the plan fully documented, you will need to communicate the policies, safety protocols and practices that you expect people to follow while at the worksite(s) and in your facilities and multi-residential buildings.

Reinforce the everyday measures that your employees, residents and visitors should practice as a matter of course – frequent hand-washing, cleaning of high-touch surfaces, covering of the mouth and nose with an elbow or tissue when coughing or sneezing, etc.



Bulletins are a practical tool. Use signage wherever possible to remind employees, residents and visitors to practice good hygiene and in cases of elevated risk, to use personal protective equipment (PPE), e.g. masks, as outlined in your Communicable Disease plan policies and protocols.



It is especially important that employees be aware of and comply with policies for staying at home if they are sick. As with COVID-19, it may be necessary to have employees work from home if they come in contact with a person(s) known to be infected.

Make sure your sick leave and work-from-home policies are complete, current, and in alignment with your Communicable Disease Plan.

Sample policies are available in the Resources section of this guide.

6. Train Employees on the Plan

Make your Communicable Disease Plan part of your regular Occupational Health and Safety training. At a minimum, employees need to be aware of the steps they should take to prevent the spread of infection.

Should a public health emergency arise, be prepared to act quickly to inform managers and staff of the steps you are putting in place to protect all those who enter a worksite and/or residential complex or facility under your management.

Have information bulletins and communications

materials ready for release should the need arise.

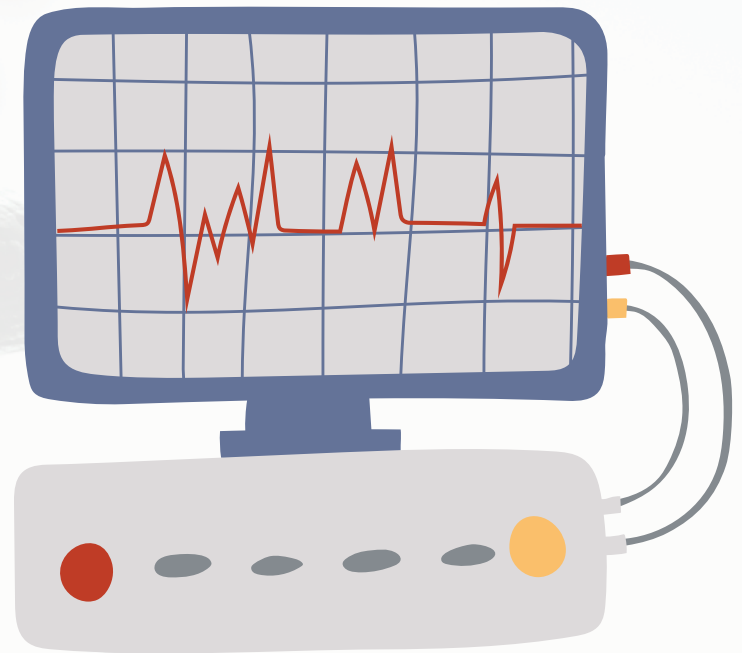
Make Communicable Disease prevention a standing item on your OHS committee* meeting agenda. If you don't have an OHS committee, then include it in leadership team updates on a periodic basis.

*Note: If you have more than 20 employees at a worksite, you must have a Joint Health & Safety Committee. If you have more than 9 but less than 20, you need to have an OHS representative. See [JOHS Committee info at WorkSafe BC](#)

7. Monitor Conditions & Be Prepared

As conditions change, it is important to stay abreast of public health pronouncements in order to act swiftly to implement elements of your communicable disease plan.

Assign responsibility to a designated position in your organization for monitoring and reporting information from provincial and regional public health authorities related to communicable diseases. Stay connected to your Society funder. If there is an elevated risk, government authorities will provide direction. This information will be critical to containing infection in



your workplace and in the communities you serve.

Revisit your policies and practices periodically to ensure that they are up-to-date and that employees (and contractors) are fully informed and in compliance with them. Make them a part of the health and safety orientation program for new workers.

Maintain safe working conditions, offices that are well-ventilated and employees that are aware that a plan exists.

Periodically check to make sure that you have sufficient supplies on hand (hand sanitizer, disinfectants and PPE) in the event of an outbreak.

Promote measures that work to prevent illness and disease. Encourage the adoption of healthy habits through workplace wellness initiatives related to nutrition and fitness, smoking & substance abuse cessation, weight management, work-life balance and activities that reduce anxiety & stress.

Encourage employees to have regular medical check-ups. An Employee Assistance Program (EAP) can offer support to address non-work stressors.



Helpful Resources

PLANNING TOOLS

- Communicable Disease Plan Template
- WorkSafe BC - Communicable Disease Prevention: A Guide for Employers
- BCCDC - Communicable Disease Control Manual

POLICIES & FORMS

- Sample Safe Return to Work Policy
- Sample Unpaid Emergency Leave Policy
- Customizable Workplace Entry Access Infographic

WEBSITE LINKS

- BC Centre for Disease Control
- Office of the Provincial Health Officer
- BC Government Information re Residential Tenancies