

A Letter to our Community about COVID-19

June 10, 2020

As we find ourselves in month four of the coronavirus pandemic, we continue to provide critical mental health care to those most needing our services while monitoring government regulations for adjustments as needed to keep our patients, staff and community safe.

In our previous communication, we shared we had an employee who tested positive for COVID-19. We are happy to share we have not had any additional cases beyond the one staff and zero patient cases. In an effort to do everything we can to keep the virus out of the hospital, we have however enhanced precautions since our last communication:

- Providing staff in clinical areas with a new mask for each shift – and anytime their mask becomes wet, soiled, damaged
- Updating our screening protocols per the latest Public Health information
- Enabling more staff to work from home
- Making changes to improve physical distancing, e.g. altering the cafeteria entrance, designating stairwells as either up or down, removing furniture, etc.
- Ensuring all newly admitted patients are isolated and tested at Waypoint, even if they were tested elsewhere
- Making additional beds available for the acute mental health inpatient system to get patients out of emergency departments faster
- Participating in the planning of the Regional Pandemic Response Unit at RVH
- Partnering with GBGH to support long-term care homes in our area and determining how to support retirement homes in outbreak
- Working with the Homes for Special Care in our region to help plan in case they end up in outbreak, and support their residents.
- Offering mental health and addictions support to frontline healthcare workers across the region with COVID Frontline Wellness.

In addition to all the work we're doing to combat COVID-19, we are excited to share some good news with the official opening on June 1st of the Community Health Hub in Midland. While moving during a pandemic wasn't what we had planned, everyone rose to the occasion to make the move a success. Many of the Hub services continue to be provided virtually, with all infection prevention measures in place for the small number of clients who are still coming in. We look forward to when the Hub is fully operational. A special thank you to the Town of Midland, the County of Simcoe and the Ministry of Health for making this project possible.

As we move through this pandemic, we continue to review the amended Directive #2 from the Chief Medical Officer of Health, which gives hospitals and other health care providers the green light to assess readiness for slowly beginning to ramp up elective surgeries and procedures. At Waypoint, our priorities include expansion of the provision of ECT, and understanding more about re-establishing in-person counselling safely. In the Mental health and addictions sector, about 95 % of services were maintained. The 15- bed voluntary Georgianwood Program for Concurrent Disorders was closed to

support physical distancing, and the provincial Forensic Assessment Program was consolidated to help with staffing for the isolation unit.

As we start to plan for the near future things may look different. We have seen the benefits of virtual care. We also know that our regional Toanche Building in Penetanguishene presents challenges with physical distancing needs for patients. Certain requirements must be met in the future, including capacity for a second wave of COVID-19 cases, and a stable supply of personal protective equipment.

It becomes more and more apparent that we really are in this together. We are immensely grateful to our staff working to deliver critical mental health care, and to the many businesses, community groups, donors and staff who have donated to Waypoint during this time.

With the pandemic and other recent world events it's more important than ever to look after your own mental health needs – talk to your family physician, make an appointment at the virtual walk-in clinic, call your local crisis line, or visit the emergency room if you are in a crisis. You can also visit www.211Ontario.ca to find mental health and addiction supports.

Please continue to do your part to contain the spread of COVID-19. Wash your hands, practice physical distancing and stay home when possible. Please also practice compassion and kindness, we can all use a little more of this. We will get through this together.

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