The Saskatchewan Health Authority has based our response to the COVID-19 pandemic on a strategy of contain, delay, mitigate and population health promotion. The SHA continues to implement health system readiness plans outlined on April 8, 2020, while considering emerging trends and modelling information nationally and internationally. The SHA anticipates sharing updated modelling information with our health care teams and public next week.

**STRENGTHENING OUR OFFENCE**

**Population Health - Protecting Our Population and Health Care Workers**

**Visitation Measures to Strengthen Safety in Continuing Care and Long Term Care Homes**

Patients recovering in hospital and residents in long-term care homes are at a higher risk for illness related to COVID-19. With this in mind, the Transitional Care Areas in Saskatoon City Hospital, as well as our long-term care homes are working to ensure that illness prevention in our facilities is paramount.

In accordance with the provincial public health measures, the following preventative actions have been put in place:

- Patients will be unable to leave the hospital or their long term care home on day passes.
- There is no visitation on the grounds or outside of the building. We know that it is hard not to be with your loved one at this time, but right now the safest thing to do to protect you both is to not visit.
- No drop off of food or beverages, clothing, and/or miscellaneous items is allowed. This includes delivery of food or beverages from restaurants for patients and staff.
- The dining rooms in our facilities will remain closed at this time and meals are being delivered to residents’ rooms, avoiding the potential for any COVID-19 transmission between our patients. Our staff are helping any of the patients and residents who require assistance with eating.
- Smoking will only be allowed in designated smoking areas. Patients can smoke between the hours of 06:00 AM and 9:00 PM. No night time smoking will be allowed. Patients will be asked to adhere to a schedule for smoking times in order to maintain social distancing in the designated smoking area for all patients at Saskatoon City Hospital.
- Two-meter (six feet) distancing must be maintained between people at all times
- Visitors are restricted from our facilities and care homes at this time except for compassionate reasons.
- For patients who are palliative, at end of life, exceptions will be made to accommodate limited family in to visit based on updated guidelines being provided. Those can be found at Saskatchewan.ca/covid19.
- Upon admission to the units at Saskatoon City Hospital, the staff will launder and clean all of the patients clothing. We ask that you limit the amount of personal belongings that you bring to the unit.
- All staff are following processes for enhanced cleaning multiple times a day.
We understand that these sacrifices are difficult, yet they are necessary to keep the transitional care units, long-term care homes and all of our facilities free of COVID-19. We are doing this to protect our patients, residents, your family and friends and the staff that work in our facilities. We thank you in advance for your cooperation and understanding. Together, we will work through this pandemic and we are confident these extreme measures will assist in the fight against COVID-19.

Be sure to review the latest information on visitor restrictions and what defines compassionate reasons at saskatchewan.ca/COVID19 under Public Health Measures - Guidance for Health Care Facilities.

Continuing to Enhance Protections for Long-Term Care Residents and Staff

In early April, to protect our most vulnerable residents, the SHA began implementing screening programs for all those working at all long-term care homes, ensuring no one coming into our care homes was experiencing any influenza-like illness. All staff, physicians, volunteers, students, and contractors working on site at SHA or affiliated/contracted facilities providing long-term care, regardless of role or resident contact, were subject to screening before starting their shift.

On April 17, 2020, Saskatchewan’s Chief Medical Health Officer’s public health order was updated to include the following:

- As of April 28, 2020, long-term care and personal care homes must ensure that each staff member works in only one facility. A care home may seek approval from a Medical Health Officer to permit a staff member to work in more than one facility if they are unable to ensure adequate staffing levels as a result of complying with this order.

Some of our staff work in multiple sites, which is why the work to implement the order is both important and complex. Effective April 17, 2020, a temporary Letter of Understanding (LOU) was signed by the SHA, Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations (SAHO) and all five health care unions including SUN, HSAS, CUPE, SEIU-West and SGEU to support the creation of a temporary Labour Pool and the cohorting of staff to address health care needs related to COVID-19. The Roy Romanow Provincial Laboratory is not included in the LOU.

Our staff are one of our most valued resources, and the LOU achieves the ability to ensure that we have the people where and when we need them. The LOU allows for a supplemental workforce to be utilized after all other existing processes related to offering work to internal employees have been pursued. Cohorting may include the temporary assignment of staff within a single facility or community or the redeployment of staff to another facility or community, as needed.

The SHA is aggressively pursuing a long-term care staff co-horting strategy in order to meet the April 28 deadline. This week, the SHA is implementing staff co-horting for high-risk areas (e.g. testing/assessment sites and facilities with COVID-19 positive patients). This will eliminate potential instances where staff are working in areas treating COVID-19 positive patients while also working in a long-term care home.

Protecting the Vulnerable Population

Early on in the COVID-19 pandemic, our homeless, hard to house and precariously housed populations were top of mind. This population is at further risk for both COVID-19 exposure and poor outcomes due to circumstances far beyond their control such crowded shelters, challenges accessing culturally safe healthcare and food insecurity.

In Saskatoon, the SHA has been humbled by the phenomenal leadership that our community organizations have shown through the formation of the Saskatoon Inter-Agency Response to COVID-19 incident command structure. The collaborative is made up of over 50 agencies, including non-profit organizations providing front-line services and representatives of government agencies, like the City of Saskatoon, the Saskatoon Tribal Council, and the Saskatchewan Health Authority. This community response has been critical at leading the way for social supports and health services to be accessible to this population.
The SHA is working with these community organizations, the Ministry of Social Services and the Red Cross to ensure those who screen for symptoms of COVID-19 have access to testing and the necessary supports and assistance to self-isolate. While we do have individuals who have been supported to self-isolate in hotels with the support of health care teams, the number of these individuals fluctuates.

We continue to work intently to both prevent introduction of COVID-19 and to ensure early detection so that supportive control measures can be put in place.

Public Health and Community Care

Contact Tracing

As of April 19, 2020, 6830 tests have been conducted in Saskatoon. Our city’s cases have mostly been linked to travel or mass gathering events. Although we do carry a large burden of the caseload for the province, we have been able to respond appropriately.

Testing Sites and Assessment Sites

As part of the SHA’s Community Care response for COVID-19 readiness, SHA has established Testing and Assessment sites across the province.

SHA also has Testing and Assessment sites, including two in Saskatoon. The purpose of the COVID-19 sites is to provide in-person intermediate care, assessment and treatment for individuals presenting with escalating symptoms consistent with COVID-19, those confirmed positive with COVID-19 who have other health conditions, or those in self-isolation due to travel or a public health directive. The intent of these sites is to reduce in-person visits to Emergency Rooms, other primary care clinics and physician clinics. As a reminder, there are urgent care walk-in clinics that remain open in Saskatoon for non-COVID-19 related services.

Services are similar to what an individual would expect to receive during an examination at a physician’s office or primary care clinic, but for COVID-19 only. This may include services such as referrals to diagnostic imaging and a course of IV antibiotics. Some SHA sites may have additional service such as treatments and procedures, and the Saskatoon sites continue to review needs of the clients served. All patients require a referral to the COVID-19 Assessment and Treatment Sites before arrival.

In Saskatoon, these assessments are provided by a Nurse Practitioner or a physician. As of April 19, 2020, we have conducted 393 assessments in Saskatoon.

While we keep the locations of our Testing and Assessment sites confidential. It is important to understand for our local community members that one is located in Saskatoon’s core neighbourhoods. This Test and Assessment Centre has been opened to assist the residents of the local area as well as vulnerable members of the population in accessing COVID-19 testing. The hours of operation are 9:30 a.m. to 4:45 p.m., seven days a week. Visitors to the Centre will have the opportunity to be assessed for medical needs if they have COVID-like symptoms. Other non-urgent medical care needs can be addressed by the Westside Community Clinic.

We are not publicly disclosing the location of any of these health care centres and ask if you learn of the locations and are not part of the population this is aimed to serve, to please not publicly share its address. This is to ensure that patient privacy is protected and that Infection Prevention and Control measures are followed. Further, we wish to preserve this Test and Assessment site for those who have limited access due to lack of referral options, lack of communication methods, lack of transportation, or other barriers.

The number of tests performed at a particular site will vary by day and will depend on demand in a particular area. The other Centre is also open 7 days a week with client hours of 9:00 am to 7:00 pm.

Testing Process

It’s important to note that testing sites are where specimens are collected.

Once the specimen is collected at a testing site, it is transported to a laboratory COVID-19 testing location. In Saskatoon, laboratory confirmations of infection with the virus that causes COVID-19 are currently being...
performed at both the Royal University Hospital (RUH) Laboratory, as well as the Roy Romanow Provincial Laboratory (RRPL) in Regina.

**Personal Protective Equipment Update**

Each week, the SHA releases an update on its personal protective equipment. The latest update can be found on saskatchewan.ca/COVID19.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Rapid Updates have also been created to answer questions that staff and physicians are raising about PPE use through town halls, the SHA’s Occupational Health and Safety Hotline and through area Integrated Health Incident Command Centres (IHICCs). As pressing concerns or questions come forward, a PPE Rapid Update is created and distributed to ensure the entire organization is receiving the same information. The first two Rapid Updates, The Right Mask for the Right Task and Disinfecting Face Shields can be found at saskatchewan.ca/COVID19 under the information for health care providers section on PPE.

On April 9, the Saskatchewan Health Authority and the Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization-International Vaccine Centre (VIDO-InterVac) at University of Saskatchewan announced their partnership on an initiative to safely decontaminate and reuse N95 respirators that are normally discarded after each use.

To ensure that we are prepared to action this solution if necessary the SHA will begin collecting N95 respirators for this process. This process began in Saskatoon and will be replicated in other areas of the province.

**STRENGTHENING OUR DEFENCE**

The SHA is working on adjustments to its COVID-19 defensive strategy (for example, the acute care surge capacity plan) that was communicated publicly on April 8, 2020. It is expected that there will be more to share publicly on these adjustments next week. All adjustments will be based on the SHA’s planning philosophy of aiming for the best and preparing for the worst.