

29 July 2020

Dear people we support and families,

We are really excited to see that other community organizations are starting to re-open because of Phase 3. These organizations have always been a vital part of the network of developmental services that are available in Guelph and Wellington County.

As you know, we have been taking a little more time. Your patience and understanding has afforded us the opportunity to have meaningful and realistic conversations about what restrictions we could lessen because of Phase 3. Our conversations are continuing, and they revolve around health and safety, as well as what great support looks like in the time of COVID-19 and beyond. We are discussing all of our services, whether open or closed.

We have heard a variety of concerns about lessening the restrictions for any of our closed services right now. We've also heard a variety of concerns about recent relaxations by the government around indoor visits. When we're hearing similar conversations from our service leaders, our Direct Support Professionals, our Lessening Restrictions committee, and our key stakeholders, we must listen. Their message has been clear: we need to be cautious, and we need to be sure.

As an organization that provides services in all aspects of a person's everyday life, we want to be providing the best support we possibly can.

It's challenging to see the limitations that are in place.

We have discussed what it would look like to lessen restrictions to a service we provide, and then close it again. We tried to suss out what we thought the mental health impact would be to open and close again. We have also tried to measure the risk of re-opening community-driven services.

Our staffing teams were a critical piece that stood out in our conversations. To provide the best support we possibly can, our staff need support too.

During the first few weeks of COVID-19, our Direct Support Professionals from our closed services were re-deployed to residences. Shortly after, our staff were mandated to work at just one employer to help prevent spread of COVID-19. Many DSPs across our sector work more than one job to make ends meet. They give tirelessly of themselves. So of course, this mandate caused a dip in our residential staffing team, but our re-deployed DSPs helped bridge that gap. To further stop the spread of COVID-19, staff were limited to just one residence within CLGW. Through both of these changes, each residential team rose to the occasion of providing the best support they could.

Our staff have been phenomenal throughout this pandemic. We're hearing time and again about how much their diligence and thoughtfulness has been the difference maker in keeping the people we support healthy and safe. For those staff who have been with us throughout the pandemic, they need a break. They need time to take care of themselves.

We're looking at a variety of solutions that could address the rigidness of our schedules, while still keep us in line with the current emergency orders, MCCSS' Guidance documents and Public Health requirements. This includes reviewing both the one employer limitation, and the one residence limitation. Our staff need to take time to re-energize, and come back to the work that they love.

Lessening restrictions on our closed services would mean depleting some of those residential staffing teams. For us, it would mean not providing the best support we possibly can in a time of COVID-19.

We have also reallocated some of our resources when we built our COVID-19 Pandemic Response Plan. When there's a COVID-19 related illness at one of our residences, Public Health mandates that each person living at the residence must self-isolate. This is to help prevent further spread of the virus. For those who can't tolerate self-isolating, we had to determine a variety of places across our organization where someone we support could temporarily re-locate. Our day sites are some of those temporary residential spaces. Right now, one day site is already hosting people we support, to help lower the number of people living in one residence. This too is a preventative measure, to ensure that if someone were to get ill, we're minimizing the spread the best we can.

For right now, we will continue to pause on our closed services.

Thank you for your understanding and support throughout this pandemic.

We will continue to keep you informed of any new developments, and you can read the latest at: clgw.ca/covid19

Regards,


Laura Hanley
Executive Director


Gerry Walsh
Board President