



SEMIAHMOO  
HOUSE  
SOCIETY

PENINSULA  
ESTATES HOUSING  
SOCIETY

THE  
SEMIAHMOO  
FOUNDATION

May 8, 2020

Re: COVID-19 Pandemic

Dear Semiahmoo House Society Community,

*I am addressing this letter to the whole Semiahmoo House Society community: people we support, the families of people we support, home share providers, and all our staff members. For the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic, we will be working together, with as few boundaries as possible to ensure that everyone is supported and safe.*

### **May 8<sup>th</sup> Update**

On Wednesday, Premier John Horgan laid out BC's COVID-19 Go-Forward Strategy, our province's plan for re-opening. BC's re-opening will be gradual and the province will not be returning to "normal" until a vaccine is found for the novel coronavirus. SHS's re-activation will also be gradual and our new normal will be different than the way we were operating before the virus hit. From the very beginning SHS has been guided by five key principles in our response to COVID-19. Our re-activation will also be guided by these principles, which I share with you below:

**1) All our decisions will be made with the safety of the people we support and our staff members being our first priority**

This means that we followed the guidance of our Provincial Health Officer and other reputable sources as we created our response to COVID-19 and made individual decisions about how we would support people based on their needs. One example of this was our decision to reduce the number of staff having contact with people in group homes. This made the homes much safer for the people who live there and the support workers.

**2) We will support people with disabilities to have the same right to safety as all other citizens in BC**

This means that we will adapt our services to ensure that the advice being given to the citizens of BC can also be followed by people with disabilities who we support. When Dr. Henry told everyone to stay at home to stay safe, we worked hard to make that happen for the people we support (and when I say "we," I mean the people we support, families, home share providers, and SHS staff members—we all worked together to keep people safe in the same way as other people and families were keeping safe). With the re-opening of BC, we will continue to adapt our services to ensure that people with disabilities have the opportunity to return to the same activities that all other citizens of BC are returning to.

**3) We are person-centred and will adapt our services to support people in the way that is best for them, given safety and resource realities**

Over the next couple of weeks, we will be contacting people we support, their families, and home share providers to find out what would work best with the one-to-one support we will be offering during our initial phase of re-activation. This in-person support will begin with a couple of hours a week and will likely lead to small groups being able to do things together during our second phase of re-

activation. All activities will be done with the recommended social distancing and other protocols that Dr. Bonnie Henry recommends. The reality of the situation is that this individualized support means that less time will be available for each person we support (although hopefully many people will be able to access SHS's Online Campus and other remote activities as a way of connecting and learning). We will not have the flexibility to have full weeks of in-person services that we had when we were able to have in-person classes and large group activities until a COVID-19 vaccine or cure is found, but we will be more flexible in terms of supporting people where and when works best for them, including evenings and weekends.

**4) We are open-minded and will revise our plans when new information suggests this**

Throughout this crisis, SHS leadership has met daily to review our response and make changes when necessary. Important decisions that used to take weeks or months are now being made in days or hours. We will also continuously review our re-activation plans and make changes when necessary. It is not possible to accurately predict what we will be doing in a month's time, but we can make our best plans, based on the information that the leaders of our province and other reputable sources are sharing, and aim for that. We just need to be prepared for changes that will inevitably happen.

**5) We will be responsible with taxpayer funds and will use alternate resources when necessary in our response**

SHS has made decisions and adapted our services in ways that are not funded by CLBC. When this has occurred, we have funded those adapted services using funds provided by UNITI partner The Semiahmoo Foundation. An example of this would be funding the extra costs associated with having a counsellor available for people we support and our staff members during this crisis. We have also reached out to other funders for support for some of our adapted services. In this regard, I would like to thank The Vancouver Foundation for their grant to help create SHS's Online Campus and Peace Arch Hospital Foundation for their grant that enabled SHS to expand our counsellor services to five days a week. We are also very grateful to the many generous members of our community who have donated personal protective equipment and other resources to help us in our COVID-19 response.

SHS will likely receive guidance from our funder, CLBC, early next week about the re-opening of community living services. This guidance may change some of the re-activation plans that I shared with you last week (see Principle 4 above), so I cannot give a specific date for our shift into more in-person direct support. We will strive to follow the direction of Dr. Bonnie Henry and adapt our services to ensure that people with disabilities have the same opportunities as all BCers during our province's re-opening (see Principle 2 above).

SHS's Crisis Response Team will continue to meet on a daily basis during re-activation and we will continue to communicate with our community.

I wish you all a healthy and safe weekend.

## **Important and Ongoing Information**

### **Personal COVID-19 Emergency Plans**

The purpose of these documents is to identify areas where support is needed if people get sick or injured during this crisis. It is not critical for Community Service participants to send a copy of the document to SHS—the document is for your use and you should share it (or not) with the people who need to see it. If you identify areas where additional support may be needed, please contact us and we can assist you in figuring

out those areas. People supported in home share and staffed residential settings (group homes and Chorus) are asked to return their forms to SHS.

The Personal COVID-19 Emergency Plan documents have been uploaded to the [Uniti4All COVID-19 Information Page](#).

### **Self-Advocate Work**

Semiahmoo House Society and The Semiahmoo Foundation has been supporting self-advocates to have a voice during the COVID-19 pandemic. I wanted to share with you some of the advocacy work that two self-advocate groups that we are associated with have been doing. The Provincial Self-Advocate Leadership Network (SALN) have been creating news releases and sending them to provincial and federal leaders, and the Self-Advocates of Semiahmoo (SAS) have created five public awareness videos about COVID 19. SALN news releases and SAS videos can be found on the [Uniti4All COVID-19 webpage](#) < <https://uniti4all.com/covid-19-information/> >

### **Guidance Counselor**

Shab Khan, Registered Family Counsellor, MPCC, RPC, will be providing support to people connected to Semiahmoo House Society during the COVID-19 pandemic. The counselling is meant for people SHS supports, including people already on the Guidance Counselor's active list, people on her wait list, family members, and home share providers. Priority will be given to the people in the most critical situations (environmental, health, or emotional). The support given will be virtual—through phone, email, or secure online platforms. Contact information below:

#### **Guidance Counselor contact information:**

Shab Khan, Registered Family Counsellor, M.P.C.C., R.P.C.  
Telephone: 604-536-1242 Extension: 276  
Email: s.khan@shsbc.ca

### **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

If someone we support in home share or residential services does get ill with COVID-19, we have N-95 masks, face shields, and other PPE to distribute to people we support, home share providers, and staff members who are at risk. Due to limited supplies, these PPE are reserved for cases of confirmed COVID-19 infection (by Fraser Health) in staffed residential settings (group homes and Chorus) and home share homes only.

### **Peninsula Child Care**

For safety reasons, Peninsula Child Care was closed to children except for those of health care workers or SHS staff members in March. There have not been any children enrolled in the child care so we have shut the child care down (this had been planned for June 30<sup>th</sup> some time ago). We are very pleased to announce that the YMCA will be taking over the child care and will begin operations in September 2020 (inside Jessie Lee school as the child care buildings will be undergoing thorough renovations)

### **Rec & Leisure**

We have cancelled all May and June Rec & Leisure events. Participants will receive refunds for those sessions.

## Provincial Financial Support and Resources People with Disabilities

More information on this benefit and others can be found [here](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-social-supports/income-assistance/on-assistance/covid) < <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-social-supports/income-assistance/on-assistance/covid> >.

### Additional Support

If you need additional support, please contact the relevant person listed below.

SHS Staff Member	Service/Program
Lise Boughen Director of Inclusive Living <a href="mailto:l.boughen@shsbc.ca">l.boughen@shsbc.ca</a> 604 536 1242 ext. 227	Staffed Residential (Group Homes) Chorus Apartment Supports
Gale Cooper Manager, Community Support Network <a href="mailto:g.cooper@shsbc.ca">g.cooper@shsbc.ca</a> 604 536 1242 ext. 231	Home Share Providers
Liz Deschenes Community Services Director <a href="mailto:e.deschenes@shsbc.ca">e.deschenes@shsbc.ca</a> 604-536-1242 ext. 234	Peninsula Child Care Acquired Brain Injury Services
Brianna Hopaluk Community Services Manager <a href="mailto:b.hopaluk@shsbc.ca">b.hopaluk@shsbc.ca</a> 604 536 1242 ext. 232	South Campus (formerly PD)
Teresa Randle Transitions Services Supervisor <a href="mailto:t.randle@shsbc.ca">t.randle@shsbc.ca</a> 604 536 1242 ext. 311	North Campus (formerly Transitions) Focus Group Encore
Anita Bhatti Recreation and Leisure Services Program Coordinator <a href="mailto:a.bhatti@shsbc.ca">a.bhatti@shsbc.ca</a> 604-536-1242 ext. 255	Rec & Leisure Services
Kristyl Downing Program Coordinator—ABIS <a href="mailto:k.downing@shsbc.ca">k.downing@shsbc.ca</a> 604-592-1006 ext. 230	Acquired Brain Injury Services
Seema Tripathi Employment and Innovative Services Director <a href="mailto:s.tripathi@shsbc.ca">s.tripathi@shsbc.ca</a> 778 888 5916	WISE Employment Solutions Culinary Arts Program (CULA) SPARK tidyAlot

Sincerely,



Doug Tennant  
CEO, Semiahmoo House Society

## Resources

While there is much media coverage of the COVID-19 virus it is important to be sure the information is reputable and up to date. Here are five sites that will keep you informed (google the name if this is not an electronic letter):

- [Public Health Authority of Canada](#)
- [BC Centre for Disease Control](#)
- [BC Ministry of Health](#)
- [Government of Canada Travel Advisories](#)
- [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#)

SHS's communications about COVID-19 and our response can be found here:

<https://unit4all.com/covid-19-information/>