



SEMAHMOO
HOUSE
SOCIETY

PENINSULA
ESTATES HOUSING
SOCIETY

THE
SEMAHMOO
FOUNDATION

March 24, 2021

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.

March 24th Update

I'm sending this letter out mid-week because of a spike in COVID-19 cases we are seeing in Surrey and at SHS.

The purpose of this letter is to share some information and reinforce the importance of following safety protocols.

A total of eight people who are either supported by SHS, staff members, or home share providers have tested positive for COVID-19 in the last week. The majority of the cases are confined to two home share homes (once there is one case in a home share, we are seeing that usually everyone in the home gets it—another reason why home share providers and the people who live there should be prioritized for vaccination). For the first time, we did have had one person catch COVID-19 at one of our service locations. **We have been contact tracing and you will have been contacted if you were at risk of exposure with any of the people who have COVID-19.** Fraser Health has also been contact tracing (more swiftly than we have experienced before) so you will have also heard from them if you fit their tracing protocol (which is not as expansive as SHS's).

There is one important piece of information that I need to share: the contact tracing that led to the confirmation of the eight people having COVID-19 only occurred because two people went to hospital for reasons not thought to be tied to COVID-19 but were tested while there and found to have COVID-19. **In other words, they did not have COVID-19 symptoms and were unaware that they had COVID-19.** This is worrisome as it confirms that there are likely people we support, staff members, and home share providers who have COVID-19 (but are unaware that they do) and are attending SHS services and/or interacting with people we support. This is why we all need to remain vigilant in following our COVID-19 safety protocols.

And the safety protocols have been working. Of the people who were exposed to COVID-19 at a SHS workplace, no one who followed the safety protocols (both people wearing masks and socially distancing when in the presence of each other) has tested positive. I should add that with the new variants, "type of mask" recommendations from the Provincial Health Officer may become stricter. Some SHS people have been doubling up their masks or using N95 masks to be extra cautious when in the presence of others. I support this extra safety action.

I wanted to also let you know that I was one of the people who had direct contact with a person who later tested positive for COVID-19. I decided to get tested because I had met with a few people after my exposure

and wanted to be sure that I did not have COVID-19 so that they would not have been exposed by me. My experience in getting the test was good. I went to the Ladner testing site. There was no line up and I was let in immediately. I had not made an appointment but it did not matter. I was not asked why I was getting tested (although I did tell them at the end because of the potential impact on people who have health vulnerabilities). My test results (negative) arrived by text (you need to sign up online at <https://results.bccdc.ca/> to get the text after testing) exactly 24 hours after testing. I'm telling you all this because I do think that people in our sector who have been exposed should get tested (similar to people working in Health because the people we support are equally vulnerable in many cases). So, although 8-1-1 may advise you to not be tested, I do not believe that they always understand the community living sector or the additional risks that many people with developmental disabilities have, and you may choose to be tested because of these additional risks and for your peace of mind. One piece of advice: don't eat or drink for an hour before getting tested—that way you can choose the gargle test instead of the nose one. I did choose the nose test this time but will likely choose the gargle test the next time!

During the recent spike in cases in the SHS community, staff members and home share providers have risen to the occasion and gone above and beyond to keep people safe and to support people who have COVID-19 during their illness.

I have been asked by staff members and family members why we are not sharing more precise information about each COVID-19 case that occurs (names of people, etc.). While we are sharing as much information as we can and the SHS community members have been very good at sharing their status if they are sick or have tested positive, we cannot share all details of every case. Here are some of the issues the Crisis Response Team considers as we decide what information needs to be shared:

- 1) Privacy rights of the people involved (including legal and reputational issues)
- 2) Adherence to SHS safety protocol (we have had no cases of COVID-19 spread where people followed the protocols—wearing masks and social distancing)
- 3) Our assumption that there are people in the SHS community who have COVID-19 but are unaware that they do (no different than any other workplace or community)
- 4) SHS contact tracing (you will be contacted by us if you were exposed)
- 5) Fraser Health contact tracing (not as robust as SHS's, but what most workplaces solely rely on)
- 6) We have relied on people letting us know if they or a household member is feeling ill or has tested positive. Identifying people would be a barrier to this openness.

Again, if you are concerned that you or the person you support may have been exposed, please contact the relevant SHS staff member listed at the end of this letter.

We are nearing the end of this pandemic but because of the COVID-19 case spike and new variants, I believe that we are at greater risk now than we have been at any time during the last year. Please be vigilant in following safety protocols while remaining calm and kind.

Sincerely,



Doug Tennant

Although SHS has in the past run flu vaccinations campaigns at our office, that is not possible for the COVID-19 vaccinations and people and families will need to book their vaccination appointments using Fraser

Health's system.

Additional Support

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

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

Semiahmoo House Society's COVID-19 Principles

- 1) All our decisions will be made with the safety of the people we support and our staff members being our first priority**
- 2) We will support people with disabilities to have the same right to safety as all other citizens in BC**
- 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**
- 4) We are open-minded and will revise our plans when new information suggests this**
- 5) We will be responsible with taxpayer funds and will use alternate resources when necessary in our response**

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](#)
- [CLBC COVID-19 Information Page](#)

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

<https://uniti4all.com/covid-19-information/>