



Saskatchewan College of Psychologists

Practice Considerations In Light of COVID19 – FAQs – October 6, 2020

1) What is the College’s view on the use of masks and protective equipment?

The current public health order does not explicitly mandate the use of masks and other protective equipment if a physical distance of 2 meters or more can be maintained, when in-person contact is necessary (exception - those working in “facilities” as defined in the order). It is clear however that the order’s intent is to mitigate the risk of transmission of COVID19. With this intent in mind the College encourages its members to regularly evaluate risk including the advisability of in-person contact, and if in-person contact is to occur to consider the use of masks by both providers and clients when providing services even when a 2 meter distance can be maintained. As new information emerges about the virus and its transmission, it is important to modify one’s practice to mitigate risk. Working with clients in confined / closed spaces for extended periods of time without masking may present increased risk.

2) What does the current public health order require relative to the practice by members of the profession?

The latest public health order was published on September 10, 2020 and can be found at [file:///C:/Users/phd/Downloads/Order%20September%2010%202020%20final%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/phd/Downloads/Order%20September%2010%202020%20final%20(1).pdf)

- Psychology falls under the category of a critical service
- Limits are placed on the number of individuals who may be present in a location / gathering. Critical services may go beyond the mandated limit as long as there can be social distancing of 2 meters or more **AND** people are distributed in multiple rooms or buildings or workplaces.
- When appropriate social distancing cannot occur in an allowable business or in a critical service “Other measures must be in place to prevent the transmission of COVID-19. This may include, but is not limited to, self-monitoring of personal health and supervision by Infection Prevention and Control Officers or Occupational Health and Safety.”
- Mandatory isolation is required for those who have the virus, those who had close contact with one who has the virus, those symptomatic and awaiting a test result, those who have travelled internationally.
- Those working in facilities as defined in the order have specific requirements for masking .

- The expectation is that those providing critical services **will** take necessary precautions congruent with the “Public Health Measures” and in particular the “COVID19 Mitigation Measures” outlined by the Ministry of Health
<https://pubsaskdev.blob.core.windows.net/pubsask-prod/116570/COVID-19%252BWorkplace%252BInformation%252B%25283%2529.pdf>

3) Can I conduct psychometric assessments?

Technically “yes” however there are some important considerations in deciding whether to proceed:

- Can the measure be administered safely and congruent with the public health order for the mitigation of risk of transmission / exposure i.e. social distancing, masks, hand hygiene etc.?
- Will the validity of the assessment results be compromised because of modifications to the administration that must occur due to the safety precautions necessary to mitigate the risk of transmission of COVID19? Consultation with the test company is advised.
- If a 2 or more meter distance cannot be maintained and as such masks will need to be used, is it absolutely necessary to carry out a psychometric assessment at this time? (a risk benefit analysis should be conducted)
- What safe guards should I have in place to ensure the safety of the client and my own safety?

4) If I use a face shield, do I need to use a mask?

The direction that the College has received from the Ministry of Health Business Response Team in regard to a question posed about whether face shields could be used as a replacement for masks when testing and a two meter distance cannot be maintained:

*Face shields **are not** an alternative to a procedure/surgical mask. If an employer completes a risk assessment and deems PPE unnecessary in this circumstance (for example, if 2m physical distancing can be ensured, or other appropriate measures), a face shield would be a suitable barrier protection.*

5) Can I provide services via technology?

- Provision of services via technology is acceptable if one has competence in providing services via the modality they wish to use, and if that modality of providing services is congruent with the client’s needs and capabilities.
- Also key to the provision of services via technology is ensuring that informed consent for services delivered in this manner is obtained, ensuring the security of the modality, ensuring the confidentiality of client information, and having a back-up plan in the event of technology failure.
- If you wish to provide services via technology you are advised to review the advisory on the College website entitled “Model Standards for Telepsychology Service Delivery”

<http://www.skcp.ca/pdf%20files/telehealth-advisory.pdf>).

- The College is unable to recommend a specific conferencing platform to utilize for the provision of services. Members have the responsibility to do due diligence in establishing a secure conferencing platform if this is how they wish to deliver services.
- If clients are uncomfortable with having services delivered via technology or do not have access to technology, it is important to provide them with alternatives if possible, and if not possible assist them in identifying alternative services and facilitate the transfer of their personal health information to another provider if requested.

6) Are there any general considerations about promoting safe practice that I can implement in my practice? Some suggestions:

- Ask clients to reschedule their appointment should they have a cough or other symptoms.
- Screening clients for symptoms and/or exposure to the virus when they come for their appointment is reasonable. Post signage in your reception area identifying the symptoms of COVID19 and asking clients to self-identify if they have any of these.
- Post signage on your office door explaining the process for admittance to the office. You may wish to have clients wait in their cars until you are ready for them. If you choose to maintain a seated waiting area arrange the room to allow for very limited numbers in the waiting room at any time (removal of most chairs or all chairs), appropriate distancing, signage that reminding those of proper social distancing etc.
- Consider asking clients to use masks at all times and especially in common areas, and require that they do so if proper physical distancing cannot be maintained.
- As the provider of the service consider using a mask at all times even if you can maintain the required social distance.
- Consider relaxing any appointment rescheduling and cancellation policies you have in your practice until such time the risk has passed e.g. waive cancellation fees.
- Make tissues, a garbage can, and hand sanitizer (or a handwashing station) available in your office setting. Ask clients to use hand sanitizer at entry.
- Ensure that high-touch surfaces (such as doorknobs, light switches, phones and sink faucets) are cleaned with a disinfectant regularly. Disinfect common high-touch surfaces in your office between client appointments.
- Consideration of how to deal with the issue of the public washroom in your office. Many business have chosen to close these to the public but if you choose to not do so, having signage encouraging hand hygiene, ensuring wipes and hand sanitizer are available, and disinfecting common surfaces regularly.
- Engage in the proper handwashing technique between sessions with clients.
- Seek medical care early if you yourself are experiencing any symptoms of the virus.
- Additional suggestions for workplaces from the Ministry of Health can be found at: <file:///C:/Users/phd/Downloads/COVID-19%20Workplace%20Information%20-%20September%202020.pdf>

7) Where can I get accurate information in regard to COVID19?

- Current information in regard to COVID19 can be found at www.saskatchewan.ca/coronavirus