



April 9, 2020

Dear CUPE member and home care worker:

Your lives change daily, and even when they don't change, your anticipation of changes makes your work lives feel uncertain, and answers are slow to come. Your executive knows how hard it is to go to work under the current circumstances.

CUPE has been asking a lot of questions on your behalf. We have daily briefings with representatives from the Ministry of Health (MOH) and the Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA), along with SUN, SGEU Health Providers, SEIU-West, and HSAS.

During these calls we ask a lot of questions, but we are struggling to get concrete answers as well. Often, by the time we get an answer, the situation has changed.

Our home care members are out in the communities struggling to navigate between public health orders and changes in their workplaces.

Below we've put together a brief timeline of announcements specific to home care which constitute changes to your daily lives. We've also included the questions that have been asked and the answers we have received.

**March 18**

Province declares state of emergency.

**March 19**

We start hearing reports that home care offices are having their personal protective equipment (PPE) stolen.

**March 20**

The SHA issues the following statement regarding home care in the province:

Home care:

- Routine assessments and annual reassessments will be cancelled.
- Long-term care assessments and applications will continue.

Home care nursing:

- Foot care will be cancelled unless worsening condition that is critical.
- Wellness clinics and B12 injections will be cancelled.
- Palliative care, wound care, and home IV therapy will continue.
- Priority 4 visits by CCAs and community bathing programs will be cancelled.
- Personal care will be diverted to family, where possible.

Unions ask for specific information regarding priorities 3 and 4 home care visits. The employer provided the following breakdown with the explanation that this may not be the standard across the province.

#### Priority 3

This would include meal preparation, in-home baths, and assistance with personal care.

Code 3 indicates that services need to go in, but the client could be contacted with a more moderate time change – 1-1.5 hours, delay of services, and shortened service time.

#### Priority 4

This would indicate clients who receive laundry support, weekly baths, respite relief for caregivers, exercises, and home cleaning services.

Code 4 indicates that the client is called to re-schedule the appointment to another time or day or cancel until their next visit.

#### **March 22**

The SHA makes the following announcement:

- Adult day programs and long-term care supported home care bath programs are suspended.

#### **March 24**

Home care services and palliative home care:

- Priority codes 3 and 4 personal care visits will be assessed based on patient need.
- Routine assessments and annual reassessments will be cancelled.
- Long-term care assessments and applications will continue.
- In home respite, cleaning, and laundry cancelled.
- Community bath program will be cancelled.

#### **March 27**

There will be letters going to home care patients outlining the reduction in services. Staffing will not be reduced; it's for patients so they know how they will be affected.

Below is a summary of the questions we've asked and the answers we've received.

**Q:** What type of equipment is being supplied to home care workers and other workers?

**A:** Depending on the type of classification, all employees are provided the appropriate PPE to safely perform the duties of their job. PPE can include masks, gowns, gloves, hand sanitizers, and hand washing stations. PPE protocols are outlined on the Saskatchewan.ca website by classification.

**Q:** What is the protocol for home care workers who go into homes and find that the person in the home has self-isolated?

**A:** Protocols and processes have been put into place at the time of scheduling appointments. Screening questions are asked; non-essential work is being delayed and PPE provided if screening questions indicate that there is self-isolation or illness.

**Q:** Are home care services going to be reduced only to Priority 1 (severely disabled with no family)?

**A:** No clear answer has been provided.

**Q:** On April 1<sup>st</sup> a new article appeared stating home care clients received letters indicating family will need to care for them.

**A:** With home care it's always an option that if we can't provide service, family is expected to step in, but we are not moving that way at this point. However, a letter went to families letting them know this could happen in the future.

**Q:** Some areas are hearing reports of home care workers being yelled at for being at work and clients turning down services; is anything being done about that?

**A:** The SHA has had reports of clients refusing care, which is an option clients have. The SHA is encouraging that there be a communication to those clients to inform of the safety precautions home care workers are taking and what protocols are in place. The request for a public announcement regarding the work home care workers are doing was not answered.

**Q:** Are the screening questions being done for all appointments? Just new ones? Recurring appointments? Is this a concern for the home care workers? We are being told only managers can do the screening.

**A:** Screening questions are for all clients, not just new ones. As of Friday, April 3<sup>rd</sup> a protocol was developed for home care workers similar to the long-term care staff screening but not as detailed.

**Q:** What are the protocols around cleaning CVAs between users?

**A:** No clear answer was given except that proper cleaning and sanitizing is expected.

We appreciate the work that you are doing every day, and we need to hear from you. Please contact your region at the information below to let us know how things are going and if you have concerns.

- Region 1: 306-445-6433 [cupe5111pres@sasktel.net](mailto:cupe5111pres@sasktel.net)
- Region 2: 306-922-0600 [region2gvp@sasktel.net](mailto:region2gvp@sasktel.net)
- Region 3: 306-757-7925 [rebeccanoble@sasktel.net](mailto:rebeccanoble@sasktel.net)
- Region 4: 306-842-1559 [5430region4gvp@sasktel.net](mailto:5430region4gvp@sasktel.net)
- Region 5: 306-783-1396 [renkas4980@sasktel.net](mailto:renkas4980@sasktel.net)
- Main office: 306-546-2185